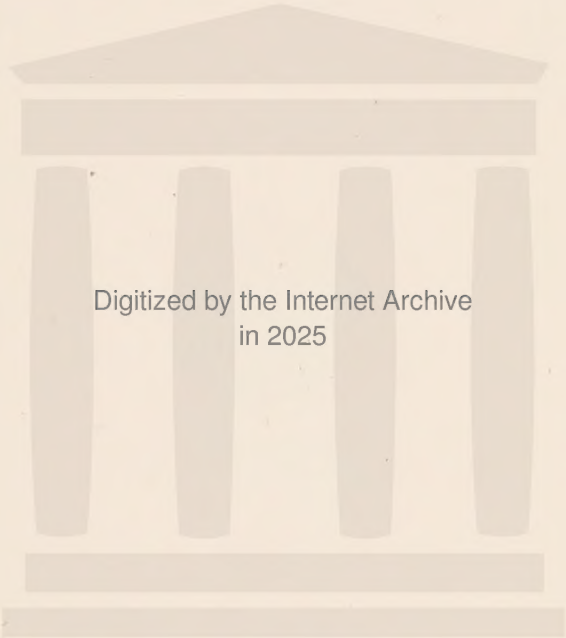
AVONDALE OF AVONDALE

Frederick Silver.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KNOWLEDGE, THE WINGS
WHEREWITH WE FLY TO HEAVEN

AVONDALE

OF

AVONDALE.

A POLITICAL ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLS.

BY

UTTERE BARRE.

I have a lever, had I fulcrum too,
The earth from dullest sloth should be uplift.

VOL. II.

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1877.

BOOK II

(*CONTINUED*)

WATERBRIDGE ELECTION.

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CHAPTER X.

Unnecessary to detail minutely the history of the next few days. There was a wonderful sameness about the proceedings. Humbug is the grand instrument of success on such occasions, assisted where necessary, by evasion or prevarication, or even, it may be, downright falsehood. The supple tongue and the easy conscience are all-important. Promises and oaths must be ready *ad libitum*, promises forgotten as soon as made, oaths sworn to with a mental reservation. Every voter has some peculiar weakness which must be probed, some peculiar views which must receive delicate attention. Happy is the man whose sharp wits enable him to discover the former, thrice happy he who can adapt himself to the latter.

Mankind has not yet reached such a pitch of

development that it can hear with any equanimity its hobbies attacked, its foibles ridiculed. Who wishes to gain its good-will must pander to it, but so pandering he may shape and mould it to his ends. Few, very few men who cannot be led by the nose. Each thinks himself a heaven-born genius or a Jove-inspired teacher, and will far more readily forgive the smooth-faced knave, who, cringing to his prejudices, has inveigled him into some ruinous speculation, than the friend who, relying on long years of acquaintanceship, has pointed out to him the risks incident to that speculation, and in so doing has been compelled to cast reflections on his judgment and discretion.

Flattery of flattery, all is flattery. Those who pride themselves on being superior to the failings of the race are yet steeped in self-conceit. Tell the philosopher that the human intellect is limited, and he may believe you; tell him that he personally is not omniscient, and you make him your enemy for life!

I have already said that Avondale won laurels at canvassing. He was a good listener, always a most useful point. Indeed, as all men like the sound of their own voices, and not a few are

afflicted with a *cacoethes garriendi*, it is difficult to over estimate the utility of such a qualification, not merely at elections, but ever and always in dealings with the world.

"Silence is golden," said the sage, but he confined the maxim to mere abstention from untimely and ill-judged speech; add thereto the attention to your neighbour's converse that seems charmed with its profundity of wisdom, and you get a couple that is irresistible.

But he was a good talker if opportunity was offered, and can opportunity be wanting when the circle is illumined by the presence of the softer sex? True enough the motion of their own tongues delights women, true enough the abstracted gaze and the thoughtful brow win their consideration, but these must be marks of unquestioned intellect. The female mind is quick at detecting counterfeits, and bitter is its contempt for the pensiveness that means inanity, and the diffidence that means inability. Avondale was well up in the common topics of debate, and the different public questions afloat; he soon made himself familiar with all the whims and peculiarities of Waterbridge, and with their stock

subjects of complaint or satisfaction. He worked incessantly, and was heartily complimented by both his solicitors and his committee. He gauged roughly the extent and intensity of the corruption with which the town was infected, and spite of the scorn which he had often expressed for the morals of the shop-keeping class, and for which Lady Wharfedale had already lectured him, he was totally surprised at the utter disregard displayed more than once by men of good standing for the most elementary principles of honour. He had called on Mr. Broadcloth, a draper and justice of the peace for the borough. The good gentleman was completely satisfied with his views.

"But I have a trifling bill left unsettled from the last election."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Avondale, who was alone. "It is not right to have debts unpaid."

"Of course not, sir; I am glad you think so. You see," handing him a slip of paper, "it is but a trifle over £40; I should be perfectly satisfied with the even money."

"Ah, so I suppose. Have you sent it in to Mr. What's-his-name?"

"Yes, it was after his accounts were settled. But you take his place this time, sir, I suppose?"

"No, not exactly."

"Some of his supporters are on your committee—Johnson and Mitchell—and their bills were not paid, I know. You would find my support of service."

"I understand," said Avondale, a light breaking upon him. "I will send this memorandum to Messrs. Rosse and Taylor; I have left all pecuniary matters in their hands, who will be able to judge whether the £10 would be well laid out."

"Oh, no, sir, not for the world! it would utterly ruin me," exclaimed Broadcloth in tones of unfeigned terror.

"But, my dear sir, there really cannot be any objection. It seems to be the ordinary way of business."

"No, no, I beg you to return it. I would not for anything allow your solicitors to hear of such a proposition. I—I—"

Here Taylor himself came in.

"I heard you were here, Mr. Avondale; secured our friend, I hope?"

"Yes, I think so, at least conditionally."

"Glad of it; extremely obliged, Mr. Broadcloth. May we put your name on the committee? I believe you were treated rather shabbily two years ago. We shall have nothing of this kind. Mr. Avondale has restricted our expenses, and everything is to be paid for at once."

Mr. Broadcloth smiled a ghastly smile, and appeared to have lost power of speech; and his discomfort was not diminished by Avondale's promise as he withdrew—

"I will most certainly let you know a reply in the course of the evening."

Avondale removed Taylor's enquiring look by passing him, when they got into the street, the bill.

"This is our honest friend's condition. He fixes his price rather high, even for Waterbridge."

The solicitor was delighted with the document.

"We will have it framed and put into Mr. Rosse's private room. And that man is an elder or a deacon, or whatever 'tis they call it, and what is ten times worse, is duly empowered

by her Majesty to try offences against the laws."

His interview with Fleshman, one of the chief butchers, extended his experience.

"You want my vote, sir? Well, sir, I have not promised any one yet. I have been too busy lately to think about it, sending pigs up to London, killed, for a provision merchant, and have cleared something like £3 a head, besides paying the breeders good prices. Fair trade you will think that, sir. Perhaps you could do something in the mutton line, sir? I have a pretty little flock of twenty just out of the town; could let you have them at £3 10s. a head. Not know what to do with them if you bought them? Why, sir, I could sell them again for you at £3 a piece. Don't like the bargain? Perhaps you will think it over, sir. Good day, sir."

Figgs, the grocer, was also a sharp man of business, spite of his liking for 'taters and bacon. He asked Avondale to try his port.

"Mr. What's-his-name, when he called on me at last election, liked that wine amazingly. He took one glass, smacked his lips, said 'twas capital—worth a guinea a glass. Then took

another, and said that was even better; asked me if I liked it, whether I drank much of it? I told him no; two glasses at a guinea each were quite enough for me at once. Ah, he was very pleasant spoken; and next morning I found he had somehow dropped two sovereigns into one of the glasses. He liked children too. He gave my two little girls a halfpenny apiece, and in the evening my wife found they were playing with sovereigns. Yes, sir, sovereigns; a positive fact. Rather strange where they picked 'em up; people don't often drop money about like that. I don't; I can always keep quiet any that I get. I voted for Mr. What's-his-name, but I am sorry he did not get in. I gave my other vote to Mr. Mulgrave. He is a nice man, though rather stuck up. My wife saw him; I was not here when he came. He particularly liked some grapes that were on the table—same as those, Mr. Avondale; that is, they would answer the same purpose; those are fresh, the others were preserved. My wife told him we had only one box of 'em left, and he said he would give anything for them, they could not get such good ones in town, and so she sold them for £10. You would take a

box? Very glad, sir, but I really believe it is the last. You don't mind? Of course not, sir. Send the bill to Rosse and Taylor? Rather not, sir; prefer to do business with the gentleman himself, sir. Usually have ready money at these times. Rosse and Taylor will pay at once? Afraid of lawyers; yes, sir, afraid of 'em; they're pickpockets. Will you take the grapes, sir? A cheque will do. Your solicitors to settle the bills? Then I'd rather not, rather not, sir; excuse me. Good day, sir."

These two may be taken as fair specimens of the run of interviews in such cases when Avondale was by himself. If any of his committee accompanied him the conversation was generally confined to the matter in hand. Of course it must not be supposed that, widespread as was the itching for bribes, it had contaminated the majority of the voters. Avondale's immediate supporters were true men and honourable, who deplored the dishonour thus inflicted on the town, and had taken up his cause simply and solely in order to put a check to the evil. He refraining from illegal practices, his opponents might be

persuaded to the same. If not, and he should nevertheless be returned, then most certainly a change for the better would be brought about. If, however, notwithstanding all their efforts, corruption and dishonesty should again meet with success, Irving, Radford, and others were determined to petition for an enquiry; better the privilege be taken away from all than be turned to the immoral gain of the most degraded section.

The days passed quickly, canvassing in the morning, public meetings in the evening, the committee sitting at all hours. Avondale's strength and energy were sorely tried, but he had his adherents' warmest sympathies, and he was cheered on by kind friends. Daily his father and sister wrote him; almost as frequent were epistles from the Marquis of Wharfedale and from Wyversley; Stuart Jardine had, of course, rejoined him, and was in constant communication with Mr. Jardine; Mr. FitzHenry sent him more than one letter; and what nerved him, or at least he thought so, more than all else, were two brief notes from Miss Dawson.

CHAPTER XI.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday came. The farce of nomination was gone through, almost in dumb show. Starrett was the favourite, but scarcely obtained even a hearing. Avondale and Everett met with a very similar reception—for two or three minutes the yelling of the mob subsided into a moderately loud roar, and then it rose again and utterly drowned their voices. Mulgrave was proposed first in order, but was decidedly in disfavour with the populace, who amused themselves in pelting him with new potatoes and early apples.

The show of hands was in favour of Starrett, and the polling was appointed for the next day. All the committees were in full work that evening, completing their organisation, and arranging the sub-committees who were to supervise the different districts. The morning opened dry, but cloudy. Avondale, till noon, headed the lists,

which were thus exhibited:—Avondale, 460; Mulgrave, 380; Starrett, 360; Everett, 350.

At two o'clock he still kept ahead, but reports were brought in from all quarters to his committee that the lowest class of voters were hanging back, the freeholders who had, by remaining till the last moment, so often sold their votes high, and turned the election that was already won.

"It will be their last opportunity for trading in the franchise," said Irving.

Before dismissing his men to their dinner, Radford had called them together into his big yard, and cautioned them against taking bribes. He told them to use their own discretion in the matter, but begged them to show themselves honest and upright, adding that, in all probability, there would an enquiry into the state of the town, and that, in such an event, they would not much relish being exposed before their neighbours. The numbers, as now declared, were—Avondale, 570; Starrett, 540; Mulgrave, 500; Everett, 490.

Another hour elapsed; canvassers were rushing about eagerly seeking for those who had not yet

voted, and employing every inducement to get them up to the hustings; and an excited multitude filled the streets. Starrett was at length first. Starrett, 660; Avondale, 650; Everett, 610; Mulgrave, 600.

The chance of the Secretary for Ireland looked very shaky.

"I hardly know whether to congratulate you or not," said Mr. Irving to Avondale. "You appear to be elected, for I dare say the figures, though not quite exact, are not far out relatively. But the Tories will probably petition, and Everett was much inclined to do so two years ago, and I believe that he has kept himself pretty free from bribery this time. If he does petition the election must be annulled. The corruption already has been frightful. I have just come from the Waterside Ward, and the sub-committee say that they have at least thirty voters left, every one of whom must be paid. Not one in half-a-dozen will vote during the next hour without a bribe."

Half-past three o'clock came. Every one had turned out to watch the proceedings, the shops were all shut, and the mob seemed rather a gathering of French Republicans than a concourse of stolid

Anglo-Saxons. Mulgrave and Everett had once more changed their places in the order of names, thus—Starrett, 720; Avondale, 665; Mulgrave, 635; Everett, 630.

A quarter to four and the fight might fairly be considered over. The noise and shouting had, in some degree, quieted—probably the most persistent of the rioters had dispersed to the different publics to talk over the contest, and to get themselves drunk at the candidates' expense while the opportunity was still left them. Avondale's supporters, it was evident, had nearly all come to the fore—Starrett, 735; Avondale, 668; Mulgrave, 660; Everett, 645.

The minutes were running rapidly out, and Avondale's friends were preparing to escort him in triumph back to the hotel, when, amidst a stunning clamour of yells, cheers, groans, and laughter Sandie MacSwindle, the briber general of the town, marched up to the hustings, followed by a drove of "freemen," scraped together from the slums and alleys, all of them half drunk, and most bearing on their countenance the marks that incontestably betoken the thief, the scoundrel, and the pickpocket.

Mulgrave saw them as they shuffled through the crowd. More than disgusted with the actions of his adherents and attorneys, in whose unscrupulous hands he had been but a tool to be employed in the dirtiest work, he recoiled from such a means of wresting the victory from his opponents. Dared he owe to aid such as that, his seat in the Chamber where Hampden and Elliott, Burke and Canning, had sat and spoken? Every feeling of honour and chivalry was called at once into activity.

He hurried to the poll clerks—"Those votes are not to be taken! I repudiate them! I give up!"

Too late. Amidst the hubbub his words could not be understood. Sandie stood calmly by, checking off his blackguard crew as each gave a plumper that helped to return to England's Parliament a Cabinet Minister as the representative of a borough stricken with a worse malady than plague or cholera, and foul with moral corruption.

His intention unheeded, Mulgrave rushed to where Avondale was standing, surrounded by friends, indignant, disgusted, ashamed.

"Mr. Avondale, I withdraw from the contest.

I dare not employ such aid as that! Mr. Mayor —Mr. Rosse, you are a man of honour—bear me witness that I do not consent to the means by which these villians have been brought to the poll! My committee have undone me!"

This final *coup* was completely successful. Next morning the official return gave as the close of the poll—Starrett, 739; Mulgrave, 678; Avondale, 667; Everett, 648.

CHAPTER XII.

Avondale received the warmest sympathy from every quarter. The Jardines, the Marquis of Wharfedale, Mr. FitzHenry congratulated him on the fight he had fought, expressed their unmitigated disgust at the way the victory, even in the very moment of triumph, had been snatched from him. The young men with whom he was acquainted, Wyversley, Stanley, Carlton, Brayclift, Stansville, and others, spread his reputation amongst their own friends, and he became the hero of the hour. Defeat, in fact, as not unseldom happens, did him far greater service than could have resulted from the most decided success. He was not in the least cast down by the events ; though, as a rule, he was apt to take rather a gloomy view of accidents. But his father had written to him, saying that himself, at least, was perfectly satisfied with the issue, and that, from all accounts, the representation of Water-

bridge was a very doubtful honour, and trusting that Walter would, on the first favourable opportunity, renew the attempt. His sister consoled him, and Miss Dawson found many a kind word for the man "whom all delighted to honour."

The papers had long bickerings over his cause. There were so many noticeable points about it, that, in the wordy war that ensued, all the other elections were forgotten, even though most of the seats vacated were contested but in each case unsuccessfully, by persons hostile to the new Ministry. A petition had, of course, been presented. The most deeply implicated of Mulgrave's supporters made desperate efforts to compromise, but in vain. Irving and others had long been utterly ashamed of the character of the town, Besides, the Radicals, especially of the lowest classes, not content with simply selling themselves, generally to both sides, and pocketing the money, had at each election not failed to declaim against the tyranny of the rich, and especially the rich of Waterbridge, and their rapacity and dishonesty. On the present occasion they had been attacked with redoubled virulence. Avondale was young, a stranger, a barrister, a

man who would not advance "the trade" of the town—all these were incidents by which to point their arrows of invective. It cannot, therefore, be said that any of his chief supporters were grieved at the fruit of their exertions, while some of them were really delighted.

Mulgrave himself supported the petition. He was anxious to clear his own character, and to prove that, personally, he was above the suspicion of bribery. His party in the Commons, under the circumstances influenced by him, as well as from a desire to stand well with the general public, agreed that an investigation was necessary. Consequently a commission was at once appointed to examine into the election, and to report to the House.

A few days after the election Avondale was dining at Wharfedale House. The ladies had retired, and the gentlemen left with their wine included only FitzHenry, Wyversley, and one or two intimate friends of the host.

"I wonder how Mulgrave relishes his position," said FitzHenry. "Would you care to change places with him?" he asked of the Marquis.

"No, not altogether. It is no joking matter for him. His action towards the end of the poll was most fortunate; it was the only circumstance that can save him."

"Yes, it is rather fortunate that the Bribery Bill has been thrown out and the petition has to be heard by a committee. The Commons, spite of all their honesty, and so forth, may not unlikely hush the matter up. By the by, Avondale, did you not say Mulgrave has since offered to resign?"

"Yes."

"Then there cannot be much doubt what he thinks of it. I almost pity him."

"So do I," said the Marquis. "It will be such a blow to a man in his position, if, by any chance, personal bribery could be proved against him."

"I don't think," said Avondale, "he was directly concerned in corrupt practices. His attorneys, Skinner and Grabmuny, have a reputation in their peculiar way that extends over half the country. They are, in most matters, honest enough, though somewhat sharp, but at election time they seem to go through a metamorphosis."

"Just so," said FitzHenry. "And it is frequently the case. A man who would not for the world pick your pocket, or even purloin your umbrella, sees no harm in accepting a £5 note, and voting accordingly."

"'Tis but a variation of the principle that rules all human transactions," continued Avondale. "Nothing is obtained without bribery of one kind or another, the mode in which it appears done is different. It is called persuasion when it appeals to the feelings, finesse when it works upon the passions, or the weaknesses, of a man. The barrister bribes the jury, a man the woman he loves, a statesman the member whose support he wants. It is the same fact, call it by whatever name you will, though it doubtless appears in certain circumstances in much grosser and more material phases than in others."

"Our young friend," said the Marquis, with a slight smile, "must try to get rid of some of his peculiar philosophy. His doctrine broadly looked upon may be correct; but he forgets that without what he has been pleased to call bribery society could scarcely exist."

"Excuse my interrupting your lordship; but,

surely, you do not maintain that human nature is so constituted that it cannot endure the full flare of naked truth."

"Perhaps not. I don't, however, speculate much on human nature. What is the soul's actual constitution is a mystery insoluble, I am convinced, by man's weaker powers. What degree of excellence it can attain to, of, and by itself, and how near God may permit it to approach in the course of ages the completeness and perfection of His own divinity, are problems which we had best leave out of our consideration. Excuse my speaking seriously, FitzHenry; I fear you think I am preaching."

"No, my lord—God forbid. It often does one good to attempt to lift the veil that hangs across the future, and to try to form some idea of the manifold change that will have come over our race centuries hence. Demons, or deities, which shall we be?"

"You are a dreamy philosopher!" exclaimed Ravenshurst, who was one of the guests. "The man whose shrewdness and practical common sense have made for him a European reputation."

"Allow me to bow my acknowledgments," said the lawyer, rising.

"Save from your own lips I would not have believed such an assertion. You are about the last man who, I should have supposed, has, even in the heydey of youth—

> "Looked into the future far as human eye could see,
> Seen the vision of the world, and the wonder that will be."

"Few of us, Ravenshurst," said the Marquis, "know each other. The springs of character lie deep, and 'tis but seldom another but oneself can probe them to the bottom. But I must finish my homily to Avondale, and remind him that truth is relative—what may appear indisputable to one is not unseldom viewed in a very different aspect by others. Naked truth, too, when it is opposed to preconceived notions, often revolts us by its very distinctness and crudeness. Besides all this, not a few of us are thorough humbugs, or, it may be, arrant knaves, and our predilections must, therefore, be very carefully touched."

"Your lordship is right, I don't deny," said Avondale; "but, nevertheless, now and again, I cannot help picturing a period in the world's his-

tory when the petty lie and the mean quibble will strike as harshly on the ear as unadorned veracity does now."

"And, my dear fellow," said FitzHenry, "you will content yourself with contemplating such a blissful time. Meanwhile I have no doubt you will not hesitate to employ carnal weapons such as what you have been pleased to denominate bribery, and so on, in turning to your own advancement the wickedness and dissimulation of your fellows; and, I am sure, we all wish you success in so doing, and trust that when you have reached the top of the ladder you will trim your lamp with purest oil, and keep it burning bright and clear as a guiding beacon to those at the bottom who are just beginning the ascent."

"Well said, sir," laughed the Marquis. "It is almost as good as if you were working on Justice Whitehead's simplicity, or were doing your best to ruffle the proverbial good temper of Jameson Edwardes."

"Poor Edwardes," said Avondale, "his temper is really vile, worse even than Maitland's. And his conceit is something wonderful. The report is that he thinks there are two divinities

in the universe, one in Heaven, the other still on earth, in the guise of an Inner Templar."

"Is he so bad as that?" asked the Marquis. "I was much surprised at his going to India—he has had a great reputation."

"An overpraised man," said FitzHenry. "Besides £8,000 and a seat at the Council Board is a temptation which would induce many a barrister ambitious of distinction to give up even a good practice. By the by, is not Mr. Johnson to preside in the Waterbridge case?"

"So I heard to-day; but you would know more about it than I. It will be much more important to decide who shall form the subsequent commission to give the place a thorough investigation. There ought to be an unsparing enquiry—could you not recommend some one to the Chancellor as just fitted for such an office? A good cross-examiner would, probably, extract revelations that would be amusing to the world at large, and particularly interesting to those immediately concerned."

"Oh yes," said FitzHenry, with a smile. "On that point we may rest easy. I know the Chancellor well. He will certainly take my

recommendation for one man, and I won't ask him for more. You have not forgotten Growler?"

"What, the fellow who was always kicking up such a disturbance in the House till Magnus Jupiter packed him off to the Cannibal Islands, or No-man's-land, or some such place. Grim Growler we used to call him. What about him?"

"He came back last year—quarrelled with the Governor of the Colony, I believe—and is now in practice again."

"He will suit admirably."

"I imagine so. Indeed, if he cannot extract the truth from rogues, and frighten it out of cowards, I do not know who can."

"Poor Mulgrave—he, at least, will get no mercy. He and Growler once contested the same seat in Ireland; Mulgrave won it; and Growler never forgave him. Why is he called Grim? Is it his real name?"

"Not exactly. His proper and full designation, I believe, is George Rimme Growler; and from the initial G and the second name the sobriquet 'Grim' is easily derived. It suits him capitally. His great height, gaunt frame, large mouth, and threatening countenance, alarm an

honest witness—on a lying one they must have an overpowering effect."

"I hope you will be able to secure his services. Poor Mulgrave! he will have a nice treat in store. Well, gentlemen, I suppose we may as well join the ladies."

"Walter," said Wyversley, as they were ascending the grand staircase, "you must take the first opportunity of making your peace with Lady Wharfedale. She was blowing me up tremendously at lunch this morning because you were not at her reception last Friday."

"Dear me, what shall I do? I had better run away, perhaps."

"Oh, no," replied his friend, laughing, "you need not be quite so much alarmed, I will act as buffer for you if necessary."

They made their way to the Marchioness.

"So you have condescended to favour me at last, Mr. Avondale. I appreciate the honour thus conferred. Really I—"

"My dear Lady Wharfedale," interrupted Wyversley, "pray don't be quite so hard on the poor fellow. I told him just now what a lecture you had in store for him, and it quite unnerved

him, I could scarcely prevent feigning illness or something of the kind to escape the vials of your wrath. Don't you see how he is trembling; you must have some mercy."

"That is all very good; every man ought to tremble in a lady's presence. What have you to say for yourself, sir?"

"*Mea culpa—peccavi*, I humbly confess it. But I have not been back in town many days."

"Many days, sir! a whole week Reginald says."

"And I have called on the Marquis twice."

"But the Marquis is not myself, sir, and you had an invitation to my reception on Friday."

"Oh, dear, Wyversley, what am I to say? Cannot you put in a word?"

"I am too much afraid for myself, Walter. We must each stand upon his own merits. But perhaps Lady Wharfedale might like to hear your account of Mulgrave's religious meeting."

"Not at all. I don't feel in the least interested in it. He may tell it me if he likes, but I shall not dream of restoring his name to my good book, from which I have erased it, unless he makes amplest submission, and even then I am

not certain. And I shan't introduce him to any one here this evening. I had so many last Friday I wished him to know; it was too bad, sir. You may sit down, though you don't deserve even that favour—by Lady Campion, if she will allow you; you need not speak to her, as you don't know her; and hold the album for her, you men never can tell what to do with your hands unless you have something in them."

So Avondale seated himself, and spite of the fair speaker's angry tone he knew from the smile that accompanied it it would be no difficult task to earn forgiveness. And he was correct in his surmise. His description of Mulgrave amongst the divines caused the Marchioness' eyes to gleam with vindictive pleasure.

"It must have been amusing. But that horrid woman, his wife, if her vanity and pride could get a similar check."

Then his account of the canvass, the portraits of Broadcloth, the draper and magistrate, and Figgs, the grocer and alderman, sketched by a few skilful touches, and the scene on the polling day secured for him a pardon.

"Well, sir, I will this once pass over the slight

you have put upon me, solely, however, out of consideration for Reginald's friendship to you, not from any merits of your own, don't imagine that. And I will, therefore, as a very particular favour, introduce you to my old friend Lady Campion, as also to this young gentleman Henri, Earl of Egremond, and to his sister, Lady Dacre de Romille."

These, a boy of eight and a girl of six, were the two eldest children of the Marquis and Marchioness.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lady Campion was the only sister of Lord Ravenshurst, and the wife of Sir Hugh De Mierre Campion, a baronet whose title had come down to him from the reign of the first Stuart, whose family could be traced back till lost in mist of the middle ages. His name had been honourably distinguished in our history; but he was the last of it, the last in every way, not alone in blood, but in chivalrous feelings, in manly aspirations, in noble desires. There was not one redeeming feature about him. He was fox-hunter because of the cruel side to the sport, and would have kept gamecocks, but for the interference of law. He was a betting man, and frequented Tattersall's and Newmarket because the associates he there met were of the type most suited to his own character. He gambled, drank, swore. He did not ill-treat his wife; he felt towards her the respect a brute has for his mate,

nothing more; and therefore he was never better content than when she left him free to pursue his own mode of life, without interference or complaint.

Lady Campion was about three years younger than himself, and the same period older than the Marchioness, with whom she had been intimate from childhood. She had a fine stately bearing, and her face, worn by long years of neglect, and that most harrowing of all tortures, the death that a woman lives who is bound for ever to a mass of insensate humanity, still showed traces of the beauty that had once been hers. Like her brother, she possessed taste, talent, feeling, that had made her in early life one of the queens of society. But she went little abroad now, and her name was almost unknown to the newer generation. It may be asked how could she have united herself to such an unmitigated dolt as Campion?

Her story was only a variation of the story that might be told by so many beautiful and intellectual girls who have "married well" and sold themselves to a lifelong misery for the wealth of the greybeard whose shaking fingers

can scarce fit the wedding ring in its place, or for the title of the drivelling fop who coarse, vulgar, half crazed, values the wife he has bought just as he does the new picture in his drawing-room, or the blood-mare in his stables, and for exactly the same purpose, as a showy piece of furniture for him to gape at, or as a fine specimen of Nature's workmanship admirably adapted for its special purpose. Her father was an offshoot of the Ravenshurst family. Between him and the title stood not only the two sons of the then holder, his first cousin, but also his own elder brother, who had not married till late in life. Of the two sons the one was drowned at Brighton, the other, an under-graduate at Oxford, died of a fever resulting from a cold caught at a cricket match; and their father, worn down with grief, did not survive many weeks. The same week that saw the father buried brought news from Sebastapol of the death of the brother in the attack on the Redan, and as he left only daughters, Lady Campion's father became 14th Baron Ravenshurst.

She had been married a year previously. She felt little love for her husband; she had agreed

to the union in obedience to the wishes of her friends, and partly, perhaps, because she had been educated, like most of her companions, to look forward to such an occurrence as the grand goal of her career; but if she felt no esteem she certainly had no dislike for her husband. For Campion, then just come of age, and into the possession of a rent-roll of £30,000 a year endowed with a shapely figure, and a not unhandsome face, and noted for his skill in riding and boating, was one of the pets of society. Had Clare Ringarde refused him many a fair lady would have been anxious to console him under the rejection. So they were married, and now half her husband's property is gone to gamblers and blacklegs, his good nature and manliness have degenerated in downright rusticity and vulgarity, and her own bright youth is rapidly passing away and bearing but blasted flowers which have never come to maturity. She had been listening half dreamily to Lady Wharfedale's badinage and to Avondale's chatter, but had gradually grown more interested as the latter proceeded with his recital, and she called up a faint smile in return to his bow. The conversation grew more lively

as more general topics were brought in, and between politics and social fiascos, topics were plentiful then.

"Have you heard Mr. Avondale," asked the Marchioness, "who are the new baronets?"

"No, I only know Maitland is going to create a whole batch 'to reward his adherents,' though some malignant revilers say he charges £1,000 a head. Perhaps you have some certain idea of them."

"No, and if I had I should not tell you. Mr. Maitland to charge for the titles he bestows! You ought to be soundly punished for making up such a story. I don't believe that you heard it."

"Perfectly true though," said FitzHenry, who had just joined them.

"I am afraid," exclaimed Lady Campion, "we must put Mr. FitzHenry in the same category with Mr. Avondale, and indeed, he is the greater culprit."

"I hope you won't say so, as I am commissioned to ask you for a song, as also to present to you both the humble apologies of Ravenshurst and the Marquis for having been so remiss

in our attentions. We have been sitting in the balcony enjoying the coolness of the evening, and listening to the faint hum of the town, till we have grown quite sentimental."

Lady Campion accepted his arm to the piano, while the Marchioness took Wyversley's and walked to the window. It was, indeed, an evening whose loveliness might be felt by any one wearied with business toils and anxiety. Said Bransdon—

"One great advantage of temperate latitudes is the long summer twilight. This is altogether wanting in the tropics. The sun goes down fiery-red, and a short half-hour and night is on us."

"One must go to the Mediterranean," observed Ravenshurst, "to realise the perfection of twilight."

"Yes," said Bransdon, "but the old Greek poets contain few allusions to gloaming. They speak often enough about Aurora and Eous, and have woven half their legends about the rosy-fingered morn, but ne'er a one about her twin sister of the eve. Perhaps they appreciated early rising more than we."

"Hush, listen to Lady Campion," interrupted Mrs. Bransdon; "she has a good voice, and I like this song very much, though there may not be much genuine poetry in it—

"The moon rides high in a starry sky,
The heaven from clouds is clear;
Her pale beams fall on tower and wall,
And on the fairy's mere.

"Past wald and schloss, o'er the river's breast,
The light breeze bears us on;
The sails hang free, on our oars let's rest,
And raise an evening song."

Lady Campion had had years before an excellent voice. She seldom employed it now, but it still retained not a little of its mellowness and richness; and her hearers amply applauded her effort.

"Truly enough," said the Marquis, "there is not much poetry in the song—perhaps because it has been translated too literally—but there is none in any of the fashionable airs; it seems to be considered totally unnecessary, an incumbrance, I suppose, to singer and listener alike. But I am not surprised at the writer drawing his inspiration from the Rhine—to float on it listlessly while the moon is shining bright on the cliffs that forms its banks, and on some old

feudal castle, perched on a neighbouring height, is to be transported to fairyland. You see the familiar legends become realities, and their nymphs and gnomes and sirens rise up before you."

"You are perfectly romantic, my lord," laughed Mrs. Bransdon.

"Other people besides the Marquis get romantic when on the Rhine," said her husband. "I remember a night in August last, when two people were in a boat between Schonberg and St. Goar, dreamily gazing at the full moon, peopling the air and the woods with fairies, and what not, and saying—"

"Never mind what they were saying," objected Mrs. Bransdon, somewhat hastily.

There was a laugh, and Ravenshurst observed—

"Though youth is the time for romance, pure and simple, yet it must be a great misfortune for a man ever to become entirely superior to the fascination of times and places."

"Still," said Avondale, "it is the tendency of modern discoveries and innovations, to free us altogether from spells and fascination. The

element of wonder is rapidly disappearing from our emotions, we should not express much astonishment if some grand inventor were to take out a patent for a grand steam propellor, worked by the internal heat, and fixed to one of the poles to enable us to go on a journey through space."

"Avondale," expostulated the host, "you are quite a nuisance; you won't permit us young people to give way an instant to childhood's whims and fancies without reminding us that we must be practical, practical. We shall vote you a bore, if you don't take care. But I fear, gentlemen, we must cut short our reveries. The dew is falling fast, and we must not allow the ladies to run the risk of catching cold."

As they rose to withdraw from the balcony into the room, Avondale was surprised to notice that Lady Campion's face was streaming with tears. She lingered a moment behind the others, and when a servant had closed the shutters and lit the lamps, she showed no trace of recent emotion.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Session was now rapidly drawing to a close. July was well advanced, and the "slaughter of the Innocents" had commenced. The debates had sunk down from hot exchanges of wit and brilliant displays of oratory into mere routine deliberations, where tenth-rate spouters, who, earlier in the year, had been cruelly debarred from exhibiting their talents, took every opportunity of holding forth to the deserted benches, and the unfortunate subordinate Government officials that were compelled to make up the audience, in frothy rhetoric not far removed from vestry twaddling. The leaders had withdrawn from the field, and were puting away their accoutrements for half-a-year. The reorganised Ministry had shaken itself well together, and had, to all appearance, amalgamated much better than either friend or foe had anticipated.

The new arrangements for the Exchequer had

caused the "Times" to make some objection on the ground of expense, while the "Constitutional," like an elderly spinster, whose pretty niece has half-a-dozen suitors, while she is out in the cold, was never tired of proclaiming against the heinousness of the crime Mr. Maitland had committed in thus adding to the expenditure. "It was, however, only one more specimen of Liberal morality. It was but a repetition of what had so often happened before. Out of office they were ready, and anxious, and determined to do the country justice, to see that the revenues were collected as cheaply as possible, and laid on in those modes which would best conduce to the country's prosperity and welfare. No words could they employ strong enough to express their horror of waste, and their just indignation at the misappropriation of the nation's funds. Once in power, the tone was changed—changed, however, only so far that though they were determined to repay themselves for their own labour and exertions, they were equally resolved that no one else should receive more for his labour than they, the Government, were compelled to give. For it was

understood that no additional expense would be caused by the appointment of two Finance Ministers, where one had previously sufficed—enough clerks had been already, or would soon be, turned off to cover Mr. Rowe's salary. Probably the same would be done in all the other offices before Parliament again met. Workmen and clerks would be discharged; there would be a great parade of economy, and the Government would take great credit for the same; while the greater part of the saving from the unfortunate servants of a Government, innoculated with 'Liberal' principles, would go to the increased number of Ministers and Under Secretaries; and so forth." Poor old woman, she ground out about a column of this style every day. She probably had a manufactory for it, for week after week the tone, thoughts, and wording continued almost exactly the same. She must, however, have known her readers' tastes, or she would not have supplied them so invariably with the same materials, but those tastes were most peculiar, and their possessors most carefully concealed their predilections. Few ever confessed to reading the "Constitutional's" leaders, still fewer

were hardy enough to say the undertaking had been pleasurable.

The latter part of the quotation was correct, *i.e.*, the fact that all the expenses in the different departments were to be cut down, but not the conclusion thence deduced, that the number of higher officials would, *pro tanto*, be increased. The Premier had reiterated in the House that such, *i.e.*, diminution of expenditure would be one of the chief points to which their attention would be directed; his new colleagues had proclaimed to their constituents that it was solely on these grounds they had taken office; and it was rumoured that reductions were proposed to be made in the Navy, which would inevitably lead to the resignation of the First Lord of the Admiralty.

The Waterbridge petition had been heard. The members composing the committee threw themselves into their work, in order that their report might be presented to the Commons, and the order for the Commission of Inquiry be issued before Parliament was prorogued. They sat eight days consecutively. But for the experience of the chairman, who had been trained for the bar,

probably they could not have got through the evidence in the time. It was most extensive and complete, and disclosed a state of corruption and villainy of which none would have supposed an English town guilty. Rosse and Taylor, assisted by Irving, Radford, Benton, Captain Wright and others, worked up the case well, and laid bare in all their foulness the moral plague-spots that had so long infected the borough. All four candidates were examined. The committee congratulated Mulgrave on the disgust for bribery which he had shown at the very close of the poll, and regretted he had not come to the same resolution much earlier. They drew up a voluminous report, in which they found that

(1) The extensive prevalence of corrupt practices had been most conclusively shown;

(2) That neither of the sitting members, nor of the rejected candidates, had been proved guilty of personal bribery;

(3) That all the actions of Mr. Avondale's committee had been honourable in the extreme, and that they had employed, in

order to obtain his election, only such means as the law permitted.

The report created quite a sensation. Waterbridge, long notorious in well-informed circles, had never yet been clearly brought before the public. Consequently, not only in the House, but in general society, was it the topic of conversation. The whole affair was unfortunate for Mr. Maitland, doubly unfortunate for his Irish Chief Secretary. Percy Mulgrave was placed in a most anomalous position. He was a Member of Parliament, and yet not a member. He could not, durst not resign, either his seat or his office. The House would not sanction the former, to do the latter would be construed by most as a plain confession of guilt. Warm debates took place on the presentation of the report. The friends of the Ministry invited discussion, and prolonged it as much as possible in order that the session might end before the appointment of the Commission; but they could not openly advocate this, and, therefore, thanks to the efforts of the Tories and of those Liberals who were anxious for purity of elections, on the 6th of August was issued the Commission. On it were named Coste, Q.C., a

well-known barrister, distinguished for his placid temper and thus admirably fitted to be the president, Grim Growler a man, distinguished as already remarked for anything but placid temper, and Warmfield, a promising "junior," gentlemanly and suave, of about forty.

CHAPTER XV.

Avondale became still more famous, and his friends took good care that he should profit by the notice he had acquired. He was a frequent visitor at Wharfedale House. The Marquis and he were drawn together as by a species of mental attraction. The former recognised in the latter a young man of ability and tact whose ambition he might encourage and gratify, and at the same time turn it to his own exaltation. He was not himself possessed of the patience, and acumen, and wit indispensable to a great statesman, nor was he over anxious for such a position; but he was nevertheless well fitted to be a leader, and had not the slightest objection to take the Premiership and to do the honours of it, if skilful subordinates, able to pull the strings that keep a party together, would relieve him of the labour incidental to such a post. This labour, subordinate and slightly esteemed as it is, he well knew

to be the very soul and life of success; it must be performed by some one endowed with more than usual discretion and zeal; and he was acquainted with no one better suited for such a task than Avondale. The latter's sentiments in respect of the Peer may be described as correlative. He did not, perhaps, form quite as high an opinion as he ought of the Marquis' talents, though he could fully appreciate his influence in society and Parliament. Nor did he estimate accurately the difficulties that would meet him in the course he had marked out—the opposition the world offers to all first attempts, and the exultation it expresses on the slightest failure, the contempt older men have for youthful genius, and the fierceness of the rivalry that success arouses. But these corrections apart, each began instinctively to consider the other as supplementary to himself.

They were lunching together towards the end of July,—

"I am alone, you see, again, Avondale. One would think my people run away when you are coming."

"Oh, no; I am not important enough for any one to trouble about me."

"Humility is a great blessing, my young friend, and it is difficult for any person to have too much of it. But I have no doubt your humility causes you to look to something more than a simple seat in the House."

"No doubt, my lord—you would, I hope, not be disposed to throw cold water on youthful aspirations."

"Not at all; quite the contrary. By the by, I have intended to ask you several times what you are going to do with yourself during the next three months?"

"I am going to Scotland first with Mr. Jardine for a week or two. He leaves town next Monday, and then, I suppose, back home during September—Stuart Jardine is coming with me for some shooting. I am not going on the Continent, unless I should run across to the Italian lakes during the latter part of August."

"Well, if you are disengaged then I shall be glad to see you in Yorkshire. We shall be at Egremond Towers till the end of August, and it would give me great pleasure to see you there for a week or ten days on your way back from Scotland. September and the beginning of October

we shall spend in the Italian Alps, near Maggiore, where Wyversley will join us."

"I shall be delighted with the honour. I have heard so much of Wharfedale and Bolton Abbey that I have often thought of paying the neighbourhood a visit."

"I have no doubt you will enjoy yourself if you like the hills; and I believe you once said you had been brought up amongst them. Have you learnt the latest *on dit?*"

"I am not certain—is it that the Marquis of Exmoor intends to resign?"

"Yes. He won't, however, do so yet, though he may before Christmas. He will be staying with us about the time you are there, so that you can make his acquaintance. You will soon know almost enough to make up a Cabinet."

"Almost enough, my lord," Avondale replied, with a quiet smile.

"Quite enough, I dare say, with the assistance of your own adherents."

"Perhaps so—there are several months before Parliament meets again, and who can tell what may happen meanwhile."

"Who can tell?" rejoined Avondale, "The

germs, already existing, of a party may have fructified and increased to large plants. Your lordship will, however, have to form your plans by the end of September. The weeks and months quickly slip by."

"Very quickly; but nothing can be done till about that time when the people will be coming back from the Continent—that, is supposing anything were attempted."

"My lord," said Avondale, "there is no need for us to talk in parables. You have already gone too far to recede without some loss of credit. Some persons will praise or blame you for Kerr's resignation. Very many will consider, and do consider, that you sent me to Waterbridge, and they say that you have thereby exacted good punishment from Maitland. Will you or not go on in the path upon which you have placed your foot?"

"That is rather a direct question, and I am scarcely prepared to answer it."

"You will answer it in the affirmative, or there would probably be another leader selected before September is out to head the opposition that will be created for the next session. Jardine, Kerr, FitzHenry are close friends, and Bransdon is

also intimate with them. Kerr can secure Tintern, FitzHenry can bias Sir Edward Pilgrim, and these two together can win over Herbert Williams. That is not a bad list to commence operations with. It won't be difficult for these men to obtain a chieftain. If any one else refused, his Grace of Lincoln would eagerly jump at the proposal."

"Lincoln!" exclaimed the Marquis, somewhat startled, "has any proposal been made to him?"

"I think not. I believe no one but myself has any definite idea what is to be done. I have not seen Kerr lately; he has been out of town, and therefore do not know his views. FitzHenry is too much occupied with his practice, and I dare say he has not given the matter more than a passing thought; but were he a rich man, no better leader could be found in all England. Jardine will follow, but would hesitate to be chief. Bransdon has not the personal influence requisite for such a post, and probably he has scarcely comprehended the exact position of parties. Does your lordship comprehend the position?"

"I believe so," answered Wharfedale smiling. "But we must put off business till to-morrow, till a couple of months' vacation has recruited us.

By the by, there is a subject about which I hope you will permit me to speak to you. I have often intended to do so. Excuse my asking, if it is at all impertinent: have you any idea of getting married?"

"I can hardly say; probably not. A young man has little time to fall in love, and he certainly can never allow sentimental considerations to stand in the way of his advancement."

"Don't style the yearnings of the heart mere sentiment. Pardon me if I have pained you. Your tone had a bitterness that was not quite natural. I was incited by pure care for yourself to put the question I did. I had hoped you had before you the goal that more than ambition urges on a youth to great deeds. You do not yet know the force of your own passions. I can see that they are deep, but their very depth only increases their strength. You may not unlikely be some day alarmed at their intensity, perhaps even shocked at their results. Pray God your affections may be turned towards a proper object. Heaven pity the woman if they are not, and you too. It will be destruction to her, ruin to yourself, and, may be madness to both."

The Marquis had spoken very quickly. He stopped and added more calmly, "Don't think I am preaching. I have had long experience with men. You have the elements of greatness about you. I would warn you even against yourself."

Avondale was much impressed by his friend's words, and still more by his manner, and he answered in subdued tone,

"I fully appreciate your lordship's kind interest in my welfare, and I trust I shall ever merit your good opinion. I know my own head, but probably not my own heart. I may already have loved and been deceived, or I may have only fancied I loved. But I think passion will with me be always second to ambition."

"It will not, Avondale; it will not. You mark my words. Take care of your passions, I repeat it. You may be carried away by them long ere you are aware of your danger. Youthful genius never does know itself. Look at Shelley's story; look at Byron's; but his, fortunately, you have never heard in all its atrocity. God alone is acquainted with it; man, I trust, never will be. Well, let this be, let us pass to less personal topics. You are going to Scotland, you say, next Monday?"

"Yes."

"The 24th. If you stay there three weeks you can give us nearly a fortnight on your return. We shall not be leaving till the end of August. Not many visitors will be staying with us, as most people will be away on the Continent, but from the middle of October we shall have a full house, and you must join us then for some long period. Is Miss Avondale going to Scotland? I hope so, as Lady Wharfedale is especially anxious to become intimate with her, and you both must stay at Egremond on your return. She intends, I believe, to call on Mrs. Jardine to-day in order to run away with her for a drive."

"No, Edith has been away from my father such a time that she is unwilling to leave him any longer, even for a tour in Scotland."

"I am sorry; it would have been a great pleasure for us to have seen her at Egremond. But she must give us a visit on some future occasion."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Marquis was not wrong in detecting a bitterness in Avondale's words when he spoke of love. Miss Dawson had lately exhibited a coolness that pained and surprised him. It need not have surprised him; for, in the first place, the young lady had never manifested any great amount of affection for him, but love is truly ever blind; and in the next, had he been as thoroughly acquainted as he ought to have been with her character, he would have seen how selfish, unsympathetic, and ambitious for mere notoriety she was.

In this respect his usual acuteness and discrimination were at fault—but did ever an individual, deserving the name of man, discern in the being that had won his affections, aught but perfection? And if Miss Dawson had not won Avondale's affections—and she had not, willing as he was to think she had—she had, at least, aroused and excited them, given them an

impulse which, later, might cause them to be developed in all their overpowering fury, just as the pebble, crusted with snow, that is started from the mountain top, becomes, ere it reaches the valley below, a huge avalanche that mingles into one confused heap of ruin men, houses, flocks, vineyards, and itself. Matters had come to an issue between them two or three nights before. Avondale, at a ball, had prayed her to discountenance the attentions of that hideous fop, Lord Killarney—"People will say you are the rival of Kate Vandeleur in his affections."

"Excuse me, Mr. Avondale," was the reply, "but I think you are totally forgetting your good manners in applying the term 'hideous' to the appearance of any friend of mine, and you are presuming on our acquaintance in venturing to lay down rules of conduct for me."

"Miss Dawson, you speak very coldly; more coldly, I hope, than you intended. Will you oblige me by disencouraging this aged *roué*. My dear Fanny—"

"Miss Dawson, if you please, and, if it will not inconvenience you, to give me the proper style."

"Miss Dawson, then—I beg your pardon. This man is really scarcely an eligible acquaintance for a young girl. If I might merely, as a casual friend, venture to suggest—"

"Oh, really, Mr. Avondale, I think I can take advice with myself. I am much obliged to you, all the same. But if we continue this *tête-a-tête* any longer it will be reported that you are a rival of Lord Killarney in my affections."

With a light, half scornful laugh she left him, and, a few minutes later, she was waltzing with the "hideous" fop, he being about as active as an animated letter-box, or a tailor's dummy.

After leaving Wharfedale House Avondale met Wyversley in the Park. They sauntered down the Row which was already somewhat thinner than a few days previously. The heat, of late, had been almost tropical, and, consequently, many families, earlier than usual, had left town. They, however, found it still well filled, and amongst the gay throng they recognised many a friend.

"So you are going to Egremond. I am very glad of it. You are sure to enjoy yourself; the scenery around there is splendid, and, what is

fully as important, the associations are most interesting. I like the hills just as much as yourself, but for the exactly opposite reason, contrast not association, because my own county, Nottinghamshire, is so abominably flat. Don't forget, however, you are going to pay me a visit there. I shall be back from Switzerland by the commencement of the pheasant shooting, and I shall expect you to join me. Jardine and Brayclift have agreed to pay me a visit, and several others —Tintern one; you will be able to look after both kinds of sport at once—and we shall have a jolly party. My mother, too, will, of course, have some of her own friends; old stagers to keep us in order, and bright eyes to enliven the evenings."

"Why, Wyversley, you are quite poetical—must congratulate you."

"Thanks, glad you say so. I was also going to tell you I am off for Norway next week."

"Norway! You will enjoy it. It is new ground, and the rocks and waterfalls are magnificent. You are going alone, I suppose?" he asked, rather slowly, after a slight pause.

"Alone? Yes—that is as far as you mean,"

he replied with a faint smile. "I keep clear of womankind this time. There is only one I should care to ask to accompany me, and her I should hesitate to take. Two old college friends are going, Horford and Charlie Havilland. You know them?"

"Slightly. I have met them with you several times."

"See, Walter," exclaimed Wyversley, a few minutes later, "Lady Campion is bowing to you. That's a fine pair of bays she is driving, and she handles them well. What an abominable shame that she should be tied for life to such a boor as Campion. Poor woman, her pale face tells how bitterly she has been disappointed in her husband. Yet, he was, at the time of their marriage, one of the handsomest and wittiest men in town. How it is he is altered to what he is now nobody knows."

"Brayclift will be his counterpart ten years hence."

"Brayclift won't exist ten years. He has not such a constitution as Campion, and he is living a great deal faster, and trying it much more than Campion ever did his. For Campion's

vices are purely coarse, farmer-like sensual indulgence in eating and drinking."

"His wife's lot must be, to an intellectual being like herself, unmitigated torture."

"Yes; she is most accomplished and *spirituelle*, and there is yet in her melancholy countenance, relieved as it is by the piercing eyes and jet black locks, which Lady Wharfedale says secured for her, in early days, troops of admirers—there is still remaining beauty enough to fire an ardent heart. Take care of yours, Walter; you will be thrown much into her company. You are older than your years, and she may be younger than her own."

"Thanks for your caution, but I can hardly afford to fall in love yet."

"My dear fellow, what is the matter? You never speak in that grating tone save when you are dreadfully annoyed. I was only joking. What has put you out?"

"Nothing particular. I did not imagine any one would consider me annoyed."

"But you are. And 'you can't fall in love yet.' I thought—I see what it is. You and Miss Dawson have quarrelled."

"Perhaps so."

"I could almost say I hoped so. You and she would not be well fitted. She is, if I may venture to say so, without offending you, a girl without any heart or any consideration for any one save herself. I have seen her more than once during the last month, and certainly have not appreciated her. Mrs. Jardine does not admire her, so Mary Jardine told me in confidence last Tuesday, at Risborough's. Don't be angry at my putting my own ideas clearly before you; you have often enough acted as mentor to me."

"Not in the least, Wyversley; but I am, I confess, put out by this matter more than ever I intended to allow myself to be by a woman's whims."

"By the by, why were you not at the ball that evening?"

"So I was, but left early."

"Oh—I was going to say she was dancing and flirting all the evening with old Killarney; but, I suppose, you saw more than enough?"

"Yes, heard—much more than enough. But let us try some other topic."

They had not proceeded many steps farther

when Avondale exclaimed, with a gloomy and scornful smile—

"Look, Wyversley, what a pleasing *rencontre* for me, the youthful peer gallantly escorting the fair lady—damn them both. Good-day."

With a fierce exclamation he left his friend and walked rapidly towards the avenues in Kensington Gardens, a spot which most of any in London he delighted in. Even as he turned his back on the Row, Miss Dawson and Lord Killarney cantered by, the former glowing with the ride, and gratified with the looks bestowed on her and her escort by the loungers, the latter wheezing asthmatically, and painfully breathing, through the exercise being considerably more acute than was his wont. Avondale cooled his temper by an hour's stay amidst the elms and beeches in the gardens, and then went back to his chambers, whence, after dressing, he set off to Mr. Jardine's, where he was to dine. Miss Jardine, next whom he sat at dinner, had news for him.

"Edith is going to Scotland with us next Monday; we are all so glad."

"Edith! How so? Has she altered her mind?"

"No, but we got papa to write to Mr. Avondale—your father, of course—asking him to allow her to go with us; and he replied this morning, saying he had no objection. So it is settled—we are so delighted."

"You must be, Miss Jardine, to manifest such a high degree of excitement."

"And Stuart is, too, I can tell you. Look at him now. He is so intent on Edith; he won't get any dinner himself. There he is taking mustard, which he abominates at all times, with fowl; and, only a minute ago, when John was asking him what wine he wanted, he handed him his plate."

Avondale smiled. His sister's pleased countenance alleviated the sorrow, the soreness rather, that was gnawing at his own heart.

Before he left that evening everything was arranged for the journey to Scotland. He thanked Mr. Jardine warmly for the trouble he had taken, but that gentleman said that the girls alone were the active parties, though the pleasure would be, at least, as great to him and Mrs. Jardine, as it would be to them, to have the company of Miss Avondale for some weeks at

Glenullyn. His sister was greatly gratified with her intended visit.

"A change has come over Miss Jardine," he said to her. "She has been quite lively and piquant this evening—altogether different from her habit."

"You need not wonder at it. She and Mr. Renshall have this afternoon, at last, come to an understanding. Mary Jardine, I think, must be credited with the happy result. She has blown them up so soundly for their slowness, that the gentleman had no chance left him. They will certainly be happy."

"No doubt of it," said her brother.

Yet, though his tone was cheerful, and a smile was on his lip, he could not forbear comparing his love and its ending with that of these two friends of his.

BOOK III.

WHARFEDALE.

WHARFEDALE.

CHAPTER I.

From London, and its chaos of brick and mortar, to the open country! From London and its alleys, rank with filth, vile with sin, to the winding lanes redolent of honeysuckle and rose! From London and its fever dens, noxious and pestilential, to the far stretching chase and the forest glades! From London, dark, dull, gloomy, over hung with fog and smoke, to the wide expanse of moor and heath! From London, close, choking, mephitic, burdening as with fetters the young spirits, to the unbounded freedom of rock and mountain! From London, foul, fetid, plague-struck, sweltering 'neath a torrid sun, to where the health-giving breezes play o'er loch and dale! From London, resonant with the outcast's cry and the widow's moan, with the famished pauper's dying curse, and outraged

purity's harrowing shriek! From London, mystery of mysteries, where cheek by jowl in happiest union flourish, christianity and crime, religion and villany! From London, the chosen domicile of wealth and corruption, of fashion and vice! From London, man's most famous work, the most glorious of all his undertakings, and, yet, the standing monument of his weakness and imbecility, of his sin and depravity, to liberty, life, and innocence, to the better wishes and the purer hopes that are born only in Nature's own abode, and under her arch of blue.

Oh! the joy of escaping from the Metropolis in the height of summer! None can appreciate the sensation save those who have felt it—none save those who, as the burning days have elapsed each after each, have, with still increasing eagerness, looked forward to the moment when they can rush away from the modern Babel to Italia's lakes, or Cambria's hills, to Scarborough's silver strand, or the Grampian's lovely glens—none, save those who, in fancy, are even now straying adown the fairy's walk, or by the warbling brook, straying, but not alone; or are lingering silently in the full-moon's light amidst time-worn ruins,

lingering with the being whose presence is Paradise, whose slightest touch thrills every nerve—silent, yet with the heart speaking as tongue never may.

Avondale was doubly desirous of leaving town —desirous of refreshing and invigorating himself, desirous to withdraw, at least for a time, as much as possible from all that reminded him of his own love, as he considered it—feelings of disappointment and consequent vexation would be more correct. It was, therefore, with unalloyed satisfaction that, on Monday evening, he seated himself in the Great Northern express, bound for Scotland. His sister was with Mr. Jardine, and the rest of the family, in a saloon carriage; Stuart and himself occupied a separate first-class compartment.

It was a calm, glorious evening, in the midst of the very hot weather for which that summer was so noticeable, and so warm and pleasant that, save for a short time between one and three, the windows were not put up.

Any journey by night seldom fails to arouse in an intellectual man unusual feelings. On and on we go, into and through the darkness, over

river and plain, by wood and hill, on and on and on, without stop, or stay. The rumbling of the wheels, and the labouring of the engine, are the only sounds to be heard. Past village and town, the dwellings of our fellows we flit, but quietness hangs over them now. Everything is at rest; and, if the wind shakes the trees, they utter strange sounds, differing from those given forth by day, as though stirring uneasily and in pain, aroused from their wonted repose. The mystery of silence enwraps us, and awe-inspiring darkness invades the soul. Yet the motion given to our bodies recalls to our mind the triumph of humanity over nature. The one is active, living, real; the other is quiescent, torpid, potential.

On such occasions it is that we can appreciate most vividly the idea of death and its outgrowth—annihilation. Somnus is the brother of Mors, it has been said. With much greater truth may it be affirmed that the repose of nature is the death of humanity, viewed from one aspect; and the so regarding it would assist immensely our comprehension of other connected and allied problems. Vast is the sympathy between our spirit and the animated external world—reduce the latter to

stagnation, and the powers of the former seem both partially suspended, and altogether modified; obliterate, abolish, extinguish the one, could the other survive?

Many a thought of this kind passed through Avondale's brain as he was hurried along. His reflections, when alone, not unseldom directed themselves to the unsolved questions of spirit and matter, of the origin and purpose of man and the universe, of the capabilities and limits of the intellect; and, whenever a fit of melancholy seized him, it was on these subjects that his mind expended itself. He had been, since his quarrel with Miss Dawson, abstracted and gloomy, and, though he tried hard to assume his usual liveliness and wit, yet the Jardines, with whom he was so intimate, had not failed to notice his depression. They, however, deemed it best not to add to his vexation with ill-timed condolences, but left his sister, to whose advice and sympathy he ever willingly and fondly listened, to be his comforter.

He mused, speaking little to his companion, during the first half of the journey, as they went out into the beautiful country, ripening for harvest, away from the soot, and din, and bustle of

London. Hitchin, Huntingdon, and the fens, were soon left behind; then Peterborough, Retford, Doncaster, and a score of little stations; and they arrived at York in the grey morning light. Over the plain they sped, and at Darlington came into the Great Northern Coalfield. Here our hero brightened up a little. He was now amongst scenes in which he took much interest. Through this rich mineral area they rattled, passing by many a colliery and many an ironwork whose names are familiar to mining engineers as those of their own children, by Ferryhill, Leamside, Fencehouses, Pensher, Washington, Usworth, and Felling, leaving on the right Hetton, Murton, Seaham, and Monkwearmouth, and on the left, in the valley of the Wear, Durham, and its ancient cathedral. Many of them he had visited two years before, and he pointed them out, and described their surroundings to Stuart Jardine, who was only too glad with the opportunity for talking, as he had been, from pure want of occupation, smoking—a habit which Avondale had never acquired—till he was almost ill. The first glimpse of the sea is caught at Acklington, and from Holy Island to Edin-

burgh the railway winds along the shore, sometimes on the very brink of the cliffs, overhanging the waves, and within a few yards of the water's edge.

The vast reach of ocean, dotted with a few ships, and the cool, early breeze, that just rippled the surface, restored Avondale to much of his cheerfulness. The conversation that had been begun was well continued, Jardine being now the cicerone, as he was well acquainted with Alnwick, Lindisfarne, Berwick, and the Northumbrian coast generally, whereas Avondale had merely passed through the district a few times on the railway. From Edinburgh onwards the express becomes an ordinary train, but Cambyn station on the Highland railway was reached at length, and thence a drive of a dozen miles brought the party to Glenullyn.

Glenullyn House is situate on the side of a low hill, that bounds Loch Ullyn at the entrance of a small, narrow glen, thickly covered with firs and larch. It is placed at the end of the loch, here three miles long, and high enough to command the entire view of it, as well as of the moors beyond, and on the opposite side. Mr. Jardine had

bought the estate, some 30,000 acres, immediately on his return from Australia. Only a small percentage of it was suited for agricultural purposes, chiefly sheep grazing. The remainder supplied splendid cover for grouse, and it was for the game that Mr. Jardine had purchased it.

CHAPTER II.

The days passed rapidly and pleasantly at Glenullyn, and Avondale recovered health, and freshness, and vigour. Politics for the time were at a standstill, but though very many members had left town, the session, through one cause and another, dragged on till the 10th.

Said Mr. Jardine next morning, at breakfast, "The session closed yesterday. To-day's Edinburgh papers will contain the Queen's speech. I am rather anxious to see it."

But when the papers came about the middle of the day, the speech turned out to be of the usual common-place description, and contained nothing which they had not previously surmised. Her Majesty—or rather those who compiled the document in her name—briefly recalled to the recollection of "My Lords and Gentlemen" the various occurrences of the past session. "There had been peace with everybody and everything

—the relations between the various portions of the empire had been most satisfactory (scarcely correct, both Melbourne and Sydney had seen some little agitation, and some few meetings held to object to various Acts of the Imperial Government). Some good measures had passed and some had not, and others had been thought of though not proposed." Then came the stereotyped thanks to the Gentlemen of the House of Commons "for the loyalty with which they had voted ample supplies for carrying on, &c."

Finally "My Lords and Gentlemen" were dismissed to their homes, with the recommendation that they would think over—well, just what they pleased for the next six months, "when the Government would have ready for them a general scheme of taxation, bills on the subject of the National Church and Education, and various other matters."

"I fear you are not much enlightened, Mr. Jardine," said Avondale.

"Can't say I am. Still they promise, as indeed they have been compelled to promise, to touch three dangerous topics, General Taxation, Church and State, Education. Each requires

delicate handling, and might lead to the downfall of a well-established Ministry."

"And no one will say the present one is well established or firmly united. Exmoor and Sloe, Williams and Blocke Head, Pilgrim and Rowe—these are neatly assorted couples."

"You meet Exmoor at Egremond, I believe?"

"Yes, but of course nothing will be done till after the return of the Marquis from the continent in October."

"Nothing will be done" said Mr. Jardine, smiling. "I presume then, Walter, you at least have no doubt about the feasibility of getting up a party. We have scarcely spoken plainly before —we may as well do so now."

"I have no doubt at all. All depends on the two or three—you, the Marquis, Kerr, FitzHenry, Bransdon; why, with myself, it's half a-dozen already—who have tacitly entered upon the enterprise, showing that you possess tact, energy, patience,—on your being in a word true to yourself. Full preparations must be made during the vacation. If we can before Christmas detach Exmoor and Pilgrim, little chance will the Mait-

land Ministry have of holding their own through another session."

"Probably not, probably not. But, Walter, you seem to me to wrap yourself up almost too much in ambitious schemes. Even now, during this beautiful weather, when every one is thinking of naught else but enjoyment, your sole relaxation consists in laying out your proceedings for the coming half-year."

"One can't change one's nature."

"Of course not, at least not easily or without the application of counter incentives. Yours, perhaps, will change some day when you come across the heart that blesses your 'life with true believing.' I am sorry your visit is nearly over, but trust you have enjoyed yourself."

"Very much indeed. I scarcely know how to thank you and Mrs. Jardine for the pleasure Edith and myself have experienced. I fear you won't find so much to delight you in Lyddonshire."

"We shall, I have no doubt. Lyddonshire is a part of England new to me; I should, therefore, apart from any other consideration, be interested

in the trip; and no fear that Stuart and Polly will fail to be delighted."

A week later Avondale and his sister bade adieu, with many regrets, to Glenullyn and the Highlands. Walter took his sister through that famous part of Scotland—The Trossacks, Loch Katrine, Loch Lomond, and the Kyles of Bute—which was altogether unknown to her, but familiar to himself. After spending a few days in Edinburgh, they travelled together as far as York. Thence Walter went west through the county to Pateley Bridge Station, while his sister, with her maid, went on to London, which, though not a very direct route, was perhaps the quickest mode of getting to Lyddonshire. Miss Avondale stayed the night with a friend of Mr. Jardine's, who met her at the station, and saw her safely off next morning by her own train.

CHAPTER III.

Who may attempt to depicture the glories of Wharfedale? Poets have sung of them, and painters have exhibited on canvas one or another of its loveliest spots, but the most skilled pen and the deftest pencil convey only a poor idea of the reality. Rugged hills, whose summits pierce the sky, mountain torrents broken by many a cataract, barren moors sublime from their very wildness, form a tableau which, for picturesqueness can scarcely be surpassed, relieved and chastened as it is by the peaceful dells and the fruitful valleys in the lower parts. To Nature this is due —man has completed as far as in him lies the enchantment. History and romance, the remembrance of stirring incidents, and the belief in legendary narratives, speak as distinctly and impressively to the inner soul and the deep-seated intellectual emotions of the spectator as the external material reality that meets his eyes

does to his more sensuous feelings. The feudal castle is there that recalls the time when England's sovereign was but a King among Kings, and there the beautiful abbey whose ruins, catching a more bewitching loveliness from their very desolation, tell, as words may never tell, of a widow's maddening grief for the loss of her only boy.

Egremond Towers, a vast pile of buildings, half Norman, half Elizabethan, is situated on the west side of Barden Fell, and a half mile along the left hand bank of Wharfe. Dark with the wear of centuries, and undefiled by modern innovations, it looms out like the abode of some giant that watches over the dale lying beneath. The original seat of the family was six or seven miles to the south, on Rumbles Moor, a corruption of Romille, the surname still borne by the family.

William de Romillé, one of the Conqueror's bravest followers, received, on the partition of the kingdom among the Normans, large possessions in the North and West Ridings. At Skipton he built one castle, and on the moor named after him another, which, from love for the chase

and falconry, he made his chief residence. His son died, leaving an only daughter, Cecilia, who married William de Meschines. These established a priory for Augustin Monks, at Embray, close by their castle of Skipton, in order that Heaven might bless their marriage with an heir. Their prayers, however, were unheard, and they died leaving two daughters, Cecilia and Blanche. Cecilia married William FitzDuncan, a nephew of the Scottish King David, defeated at Northallerton, in 1138. They had an only child, a boy, who, as is related in Wordsworth's well known poem, was drowned while attempting to leap across the "Strid," a spot in Barden Woods where Wharfe is contracted into a chasm but a few feet wide. To his memory the bereaved mother erected the noble Abbey of Bolton, and removed thither the Augustin monks from Embray.

> The stately Priory was reared;
> And Wharfe as he moved along
> To Matins joined a mournful voice,
> Nor failed at even song.

This branch thus extinct, the estates went to Blanche, whose husband, Roger Dacre, Lord of Dacre and Ripley, had received with her the

Baronies of Egremond and Thornthwaite, lying on the east of Wharfe. He now became the most powerful peer in Yorkshire, and was created Earl Egremond, preferring it as being the title the Romillés had borne in Normandy, to the Earldom of Skipton, which the Conqueror had conferred on them. He took his wife's designation in addition to his own, and henceforth, till the downfall of the Plantagenets, Dacre de Romillé was a prominent name in our annals. The bearers of it were noted for their unswerving loyalty. They were haughty, arrogant, brave, despising the canaille, and, considering all the actions of their king sanctified by the source from which they proceeded. They supported Edward II. in his war both with the Scots and with the revolted nobles; and the then Earl of Egremond perished at Bannockburn.

His brother, Sir Henri Dacre de Romillé commanded at Boroughbridge seven years later, as guardian of the young Earl, the Romille vassals. Through the misconduct and incapacity of Edward, the Scots had not only thrown off the English yoke, but were also threatening to reduce the northern counties. Again and again they pene-

trated through Northumberland and Durham far into York, and it required all the exertions of this Sir Henri and Earl Percy to repel their attack. In the first year of Edward II.'s reign they reached the Cathedral City, and affixed over the porch of St. Peter's the distich—

> "Long beards heartless, painted hood witless,
> Gay coats graceless, make England thriftless,"

in allusion to the English dress and long beards.

"Christe's dethe!" exclaimed Sir Henri, as he rode into the town two days after the invaders withdrawing on rumour of his approach, "Christe's dethe! but these half-starved barbarians shall wipe out the insult with their blood."

He took down the slip of parchment and placed it on his helmet, as young men would put their lady's glove.

Next year occurred, at this same city, the nuptials of Edward III. and Philippa of Hainault. The festive proceedings were most gorgeous, but were brought to a rueful close by the disgraceful conduct of the foreign soldiery, who had come as the retinue of the bride's father. They gave such free vent to their passions as to

assault some of the female inhabitants, and to set fire to some of the outskirts of the town. The citizens armed themselves, and called out Sir Henri for aid. He right willingly mustered his men and joined them, and a pitched battle ensued in the Watlingate, in which over 500 of the rioters were slain. Sir Henri offered to defend his conduct by wager of battle with Lord John of Hainault himself, or any one of his peers, but his name was so renowned and his bodily strength was such that none accepted the challenge. Twenty years later, at Neville's Cross, Sir Henri dipped deep in Scottish blood the parchment scroll which he still bore on his helmet. He was then in his fifty-fifth year, and was accompanied by his nephew at the head of a chosen body of his retainers. He commanded the third division of the army, a post for which his long experience in northern warfare especially fitted him, while the savage joy with which he rushed to a melée rendered a charge which he led irresistible. The enemy were giving way when he brought up his body for the final *coup*—two hundred knights, sheathed horse and rider in full armour, three times as many squires similarly accoutred, and

two thousand men at arms covered with mail.

"Romillé!" and "Egremond!" rent the air as they dashed on the foe; "the demon of York!" passed down the Scottish ranks as Sir Henri was recognised well in front bestriding a powerful horse, black as jet, which delighted in the fray and in carnage as joyfully as did his master, and which had been, so the common people, as is their wont, said, a present from the infernal regions. The battle already over was transformed into a mere *debaile*. The invaders, scattered like thin mist before the northern blast, and fled precipitously. One or two of the more powerful clans either surrendered in a body or made good their retreat across the country, but the majority perished in the butchery that ensued. Sir Henri died, unmarried, in 1350, and the burgesses of York honoured him with a public funeral in their stately Cathedral.

The son of the earl mentioned above joined in Scrope's conspiracy, but was let off with life, though some of his estates were forfeited. He never became reconciled to the usurpers, and therefore kept himself apart from political

affairs; but his son and grandson were two of the ablest supporters of the York family. The one was killed at Wakefield, or as was commonly believed, was mercilessly butchered after the fight. Egremond Towers was sacked afterwards, and partially burnt, two of the late Earl's children perishing in the flames. The other, a lad of eighteen, amply avenged his father's death at Towton a few months later. So great was the carnage in that fight that the river Cock ran blood, and dyed for many a mile with a purple hue the waters of Wharfe into which it flowed.

Wharfe, as it rushed through the "Strid," always before calamity to the Romillé family raised a long drawn groan and an unearthly roar which could be heard far up the valley, and on the summits of the surrounding hills, and which struck ominously on the ear even of the most sceptical. But on this dreadful morning the rumble that it ever emits was changed into a melodious air, as though the waters were hurrying eagerly to partake of the tide of blood; and the bells of the stately Priory close by gently rocked, though the wind was still, as if swung by unseen hands; and when it was told the

countess, the aged servants of the house said their lord's murder and the death of his infants were avenged. And ere the following morn messengers came mud-stained and bloody from the battle field to announce the total destruction of the Lancastrians.

Fierce and exulting was the joy of the bereaved widow as she greedily drank in every word of their terrible narrative. Thirty thousand of the Red Rose were down, and in many parts Wharfe, though swollen high by the early spring rains, could be forded on their bodies. But to all this mass of suffering she gave no thought, nor to the wives, now widows like herself, and the mothers bereft of their children; for revenge was the creed of gentle and simple in those rough times, and amongst the more untamed barons animosity and hate were cherished as household plants. Forthwith, despite the prayers and supplications of the monks, she caused a joyous peal to be rung out from the Abbey. But the act of sacrilege drew down God's anger on the house, and the bells which she had rung in glee at the slaughter of her foes, ever after, instead of the moaning of the Strid, themselves foreboded approaching death or

misfortune. At night, when deepest calm had fallen around, they would suddenly set themselves in motion, commencing with a soothing chime and ending with a funereal toll, and all who listened to the dread-inspiring notes were assured that before another sun had set another Romillé would be gathered to his fathers.

Fiercer and more savage grew the pleasure of the stern dame as she saw how all the land for miles round was covered thick with a mantle of snow, and as complete accounts came in of the loss of life, and it culminated when, late in the evening, she learnt that the Earl of Wiltshire had been captured. He had been commander, with the "butcher" Clifford, of Margaret's forces at Wakefield, and had directed the subsequent attack on Egremond. A month later, on the merry May day of 1361, he was beheaded at Newcastle, and on the same day expired the Countess, overpowered by excess of satisfaction at his execution, her decease preceded by the Romillé death-peal which, for the first time on that bright spring morn, sounded forth from St. Austin's Tower.

This same Earl fought for Richard III., at

Bosworth, and on the accession of Henry Tudor was attainted and his estates sequestered, the greater portion, including all Bolton Abbey and all south and west of it, being transferred to the son of Clifford, the Lancastrian, from whose descendants this property passed, nearly two centuries later, into the Devonshire family, its present owners.

The Abbey was surrendered in 1539 to the Royal Commissioners, and by them sold to Henry Clifford, 1st Earl of Cumberland, on the extinction of which title it also went by the marriage of the last Earl's sole daughter, to the ancestor of the Dukes of Devonshire. Henry VIII. restored the grandson of the attainted noble to the barony of Dacre, and gave him back Egremond Towers and the property lying about the upper part of Wharfedale. The second Baron Dacre, in the reign of the maiden queen, rebuilt much of the Castle which had remained in ruins since 1460, enabled to do so by his marriage with the sole heiress of a neighbouring landowner.

The Dacres apparently had had enough of fighting during the Lancaster and York dynasties, and they kept clear of both sides during the civil

war. Under Charles II. one of them became a popular leader, and assisted greatly in securing the throne for William of Orange, from whom he received by regrant the cherished dignity of his house, the Earldom of Egremond. A century later Pitt raised the 3rd Earl to the Marquisate of Wharfedale. He had been a good debater and a skilful tactician, and had rendered the Premier great assistance by his management of the Upper House. The present Marquis was his grandson, and the fourth of the title. His possessions were not so extensive as when his forefathers had been kings of the West Riding, but a succession of good marriages had added greatly to the estates returned by Henry VIII. to the first Baron Dacre, while his wife, the elder daughter of the Duke of Hants, had brought him a considerable property in Ulster. Careful management had also largely developed the resources of his English domains, and especially the mineral wealth of a small tract of land situated in the far-famed Hallamshire.

We have said that Egremond Towers is situate on the west side of Barden Fell. It is several hundred feet above the bed of Wharfe, and is reached by a good, though somewhat steep, car-

riage drive. From the Keep, one of the most perfect in England, a splendid view is obtained all round. North-west and west the hills of Lancashire and Westmoreland limit the gaze, Whernside, Pen-y-gaut, and Ingleborough rising conspicuously among them. South, at the very feet, is the Abbey, and, winding for miles, the lovely dales; farther on Skipton and Rumbles Moor; and in the extreme distance the chimneys of Leeds and Bradford, overhung by the cloud of smoke that is ever issuing from them. East the eyes explore the great plain of the country, York and its cathedral, and the rolling Wolds that stretch away to the German Ocean.

CHAPTER IV.

It was late when Avondale reached Pateley Bridge Station, where Wyversley was awaiting him, and, consequently, the 10 miles' drive thence to Egremond made it nearly dark ere they arrived at their destination.

"You will, of course, not meet many visitors there now. Several of the county magistrates have put in an appearance 'to pay their respects' or whatever they term it. Three or four have come down from town with the Marquis for the sake of the scenery, Count Varchi and his wife—I believe you have met them—Sir Thomas Maddox, the banker, and some girls—I can't exactly say to half-a-dozen—Lady Campion, her husband will be here by the end of next week—they live not far from Leeds—the Marquis of Exmoor, Chief Commissioner of the Navy."

They passed under an archway surmounted by a tower, the double gates clanging together be-

hind them, and entered a large rectangular court-yard. Two servants sprang forward to hold the horses, and to take the luggage. A flight of six steps led from the yard to a terrace, and another similar flight to the hall which was thus elevated sufficiently to overlook the court-yard wall. The hall was a grand relic of the feudal times, 120 feet long by 60 wide, its sides wainscotted with oak, and the roof, which was 60 feet from the floor, formed of the same wood. Over the greater portion of the hall there were no other rooms, but 30 feet at the farther end, which were somewhat raised above the remainder so as to form a dais, were situate under the Keep, the oldest part of the castle. The hall was lighted from the roof, and by means of two large windows, one on either side of the door. Opening into it on the east were the dining and reception rooms, and in the rear, the kitchens; on the west the library, the breakfast parlour, and the private apartments of the family. From either side of the dais sprang a branch of the grand staircase, from the first landing of which ran to and over the entrance of the hall a gallery.

This much Avondale was able to observe as

they walked down it, preceded by a lacquey, who, at the foot of the staircase, handed them over to another servant, and this latter took them at once to the drawing room. Avondale was in consternation at the idea of presenting himself in his present state, travel-stained and dusty, before ladies, but his host at once put him at ease.

"Don't be alarmed at your appearance, my dear Sir. I see you are quite shocked. But I directed them to bring you at once to me. I knew you would be tired, and as it would be late it was not worth troubling to change your dress."

Lady Wharfedale extended her hand—"I trust you will have fine weather for your visit. You must make the acquaintance of the ladies in the morning, Mr. Avondale. I dare say you will not be sorry to find your apartments—it is a fatiguing ride from Edinburgh, and the road from Pateley is not very smooth. Perhaps, Wyversley, you will kindly take my place, and ask Edwards to show Mr. Avondale the way."

Avondale was not sorry to withdraw, for he was over punctilious in the matter of dress and neatness, and he disliked nothing so much as an untidy habit.

"Never mind Edwards," said Wyversley, as they left the room. "He will look after your things, without our seeking for them. He is the groom of the chambers, a capital old fellow, somewhat staid and dignified, and certainly fitted for his office."

Avondale's rooms were just over the hall in the Keep.

"I am next you," said Wyversley. "It is a very good arrangement, that is, if you like it. We must think ourselves great people, for, next to the State apartments, Wharfedale considers this the most honourable part of the Castle. Varchi has the suite on the other side. Ah, here are your things, and the servant appointed specially for you. You have not brought one yourself, I think. Let me see, what is your name?" he continued to the man. "I remember your face."

"Clifford, my Lord,—Henry Clifford."

"Oh, yes. You have brought up all the luggage?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I suppose we shall not want you any more.

Walter, I believe you are an early riser. Perhaps you would like a canter before breakfast?"

"Yes, very much, if it should be fine."

"So should I, too. Then, Clifford, will you have the goodness to have two horses ready by half-past six to-morrow?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Another proof of Wharfedale's—or, Mr. Edwards' discrimination—," exclaimed Wyversley, after the man had left them. "Clifford is one of the favourite attendants. His father is a small farmer on Barden Moor, and, I believe, a lineal descendant from Clifford, of Wakefield. Fortune plays strange games occasionally. You will find him very attentive, and when he is not at hand there is my own man, Johnson—you know him—who has been here almost as often as I. We must employ this sitting room as common property, though I trust the weather won't allow us to stay in much. There are only five rooms this side of the tower, as the staircase takes up the place of one; on the other side there are six. By the bye, you are looking much fresher than you were before you went

to Scotland. You were harassed and pale then."

"No wonder. A month's electioneering, followed by six weeks' baking sun in London, is enough to try the strongest constitution, and to take the colour from any one's cheek."

Wyversley might have added "and conflicting passions, and an aching heart." He did not, however, allude to Miss Dawson, as his friend seemed anxious to avoid the topic.

"Ah, oatmeal porridge and salmon trout have agreed with you."

"Yes, amazingly, as they would with any one. But, I am forgetting—how is it you are back so soon from Norway?"

"Cheshunt's father, the Earl of Horford, was suddenly taken ill. His heart is not in perfect trim; he has had one or two attacks, and, I dare say, will go off rather suddenly some day. He is a relation of my mother, and so, of course, I returned with Cheshunt, while Havilland joined himself to another band of wanderers, whom we had come across, and who, in fact, told us the telegram was waiting for us. However, Horford was quite well again before we reached England.

I remained a few days at Wyversley, and then came on here. My mother has half promised to come too. I hope she will, as I am very desirous to introduce you to her. Well, we must separate at once, or we shall go on talking all night. There—it's half-past eleven," as a small, neatly finished timepiece notified the half-hour. "It will be morning before we have had a sound sleep. Good-night."

The morning broke fine, and by the hour appointed the two friends were up. Clifford had the horses waiting, and was ready himself, but Wyversley told him they would not trouble him.

"We will cross the Wharfe and on to Barden Moor," he said to Avondale. "It will be quite far enough for an hour's trot, and you will get a good look at the Castle from the other side of the dale."

The ascent from the ruins to the Moor is very steep, but it is the only point from which to see Egremond Towers in all its grandeur.

"A splendid specimen of feudal architecture, the central part, is it not?" said Wyversley. "All inside the wall stands as it was in the times of the Edwards. The two towers, Sir Henri's on

the east, and Lady Maud's on the west, from which the wall starts, together with the hall and the keep, have had only sufficient repairs done to them to preserve them properly. The wings are much newer. The west—the family side, they call it—was built by the 2nd Dacre, a little after the middle of the 16th century. The chapel—you can just see it, half hidden at the rear—is a fine example of the Elizabethan style. It is reached by a passage from the foot of the grand staircase, and from the servants' buildings behind. The terrace, too, runs along from the library, and ends against it."

"That is a magnificent terrace; and the lawn from the foot of it to the lake is very pretty."

"Yes—it is well covered with shrubs. The lake gives a pretty effect to the grounds. It is of no great size, about twelve acres, but its length makes it appear much larger. It is, however, surprising that there should be so much level ground in such a hilly spot. There are several islands in the lake. On one of them are the ruins of a small oratory, said to have been erected by the Lady Maud, who gives her name to

the West Tower. There is a fountain on another; it is supplied from the Fell, some considerable distance above the castle, and, consequently, goes up a tremendous height. I believe it is in play now—yes, there it is. You can catch the sunlight falling on the spray."

"It is very beautiful."

"You will think it is beautiful, when some fine evening you see the sun gradually sink down, his last rays playing on the water of the lake and against the grey battlements, and finally glinting upon the summit of the Fell, after he is himself below the horizon. Ah, now look south—the mists have risen from the dale, and you can perceive a little of its beauty. I must not, however, attempt to exhibit it to you all at once, or I shall deprive the Marquis of that pleasure. He is never tired of showing his visitors the glories of Wharfedale; and, if the Marchioness has any weakness, it is her love for this grand neighbourhood, and her pride in the past history of her husband's family. It is getting late. We must hurry back, or the more early people may have finished breakfast, and have dispersed, before we

put in an appearance. This is Barden Tower. It belongs to the Duke of Devonshire, so that we are now out of the Romillé property."

They had been riding along the edge of the moor. Now, descending a rough, precipitous, bridle path into the valley below, they reached the castle in a few minutes' smart trot.

As they dismounted in the court-yard Wyversley pointed out two arched passages leading from it under the castle.

"The way to the stables. You see the building is raised some eight or ten feet above the ground, partly on arches, which, in olden times, were used as stables, storehouses, and, I dare say, dungeons. The stables are at the back now, and the dungeons have gone, with other antique institutions. Rather a neat arrangement, in every way, of our forefathers. These rooms would contain an immense quantity of provisions, and the horses being there, too, there would be no need of sheds and outbuilings for them, breaking the symmetry of the pile. And the castle, being thus elevated, many lives would be lost, even after the court-yard was captured by the enemy, ere these steps could be scaled."

CHAPTER V.

They entered the hall—"Prayers over, Freeman?" asked Wyversley of one of the upper servants.

"Yes, my lord. It has just gone the half-hour."

"We are in capital time, then, Walter. The Marquis is a strict Churchman, and not only has service every morning at eight, but attends himself, and makes most of the retainers do the same. Consequently, in the summer, when there are many visitors of a like disposition, we make up a pretty numerous congregation. Breakfast is laid by quarter-past, in proportion to the number expected to sit down, and cleared away by ten o'clock at this season—eleven in the winter—so that you must not lie abed very late, or you will have to grub solus in your own room. I dare say it will be spread in the bay room, that in the east wing looking out on the grounds, so-

called from its large windows. Yes, and by Jove! what a number are here. Where have they all come from? Where are we to sit? It is no use your looking for Lady Wharfedale—you must be content with the company of some lesser star."

"Good morning, good morning," he continued, nodding to different persons whom he knew. "Oh, thanks, Lady Campion," as that lady beckoned to him saying—

"I have kept a seat expressly for you, Wyversley. If Miss Maddox will move a little, perhaps we can find room for your friend as well. Miss Maddox—Mr. Avondale. You know the name, as every one does already. Don't be astonished if he looks quite an ordinary mortal. One of you men bring a chair, and just place those two or three a little closer. There, that will do."

"We must be much obliged to your diplomacy," said Wyversley. "There is plenty of room at the second table, but it is inhabited, Walter would say, by a set of squires, whose conversation will, doubtless, be overflavoured with turnips and hay."

"Nothing of the kind. You ought not to get into the habit of contemning people merely because they live in the country. Anyhow, they get up early instead of lying in bed till they miss chapel and almost breakfast too."

"Ah, Lady Campion, your retort is pointless. Walter and myself have ridden across Barden Moor, as far as the tower. We were up long before you were stirring."

"Oh, I am so sorry. I should so much have liked a ride. It has been so very beautiful this morning. I was not aware that Mr. Avondale cared much for athletic exercise."

"That is good," said Wyversley, laughing. "Walter, do you hear Lady Campion?"

"Sorry I did not. I am so interested in Miss Maddox's conversation, that I have ears for nothing else—and pretty well occupied with this fowl. There must be some mistake about the matter—the mother, or rather the great grandmother has evidently been slaughtered, instead of her descendant; dear me, it is tough, to be sure. I must give it up; and will try to get you a slice from some one else, Miss Maddox. What

was it, Wyversley? Something extremely complimentary, no doubt, as all Lady Campion's speeches are."

"Oh, no; don't plume yourself. She had no idea you cared for riding, or anything of the kind. Rather a joke. Why, my dear Lady Campion, he was one of the best cricketers at Cambridge—he played for his University against England, Marylebone, and Oxford. I don't think you did much your last year?"

"No; I was cramming for the degree."

"You must accept my apologies, Mr. Avondale. You have acquired such a reputation of late that it is excusable if one does not even suspect your greatness in another career."

"You really must have some consideration for my natural bashfulness. I shall otherwise dissolve in blushes, as Niobe did in tears."

"And you must have met him in the Row often enough," continued Wyversley. "His horse is a slight, half-bred chestnut."

"There are so many chestnuts that it is not very probable that I should recognise the horse under such a description, any more than the rider before I had made his acquaintance.

However, I will keep a sharp look out for both in future. I had better make a note of the same," and she drew out, laughing, a tiny pocket-book. "'To watch very carefully for the appearance'—no, 'advent' will do better—'for the advent of a'—let me see, which is the more important animal?—the quadruped decidedly—'of a horse, slim, neat limbs, of good blood, fiery, splendidly caparisoned, &c., &c., &c.; and of a rider, tall, well-made, of majestic mien, intellectual, &c., &c., &c.' I shall take to novel writing, I think; I could pourtray cavaliers and their steeds almost as well as G. P. R. James."

"It is too bad of you," said Wyversley, "but you will get the worst of it with Avondale. And I shall punish you by handing him this book," as he deftly twisted it out of her hand. "There it is, Walter; I have no doubt there are some other interesting memoranda in it; we will examine it at our leisure."

"Oh, don't keep it," prayed Lady Campion. "Please hand it back to me, Mr. Avondale. It would be very ungentlemanly for you to look at it. If you presume even to open it, I won't ask

either of you to take me for a ride to-morrow morning, as I had intended to do."

"I won't risk such a penalty," said Avondale, as he returned the object of debate. "It is no use, Wyversley, for a man to think of opposing a woman's slightest whim, and of thinking to get off scot free. She would find some method to annoy him, even in heaven, and that, doubtless, is the reason why they are to be excluded from the final abode of the blessed. I have often thought that, in all probability, the fallen spirits were the female portion of the angels, and that it was their petty animosity, and the constant bickerings resulting from it, and not ambition more than human, which caused them to be expelled. The Greeks had evidently the very same idea in the picture they drew of Juno and her turbulent temper and spiteful jealousy."

"Oh, Mr. Avondale! this is abominable!" arose in chorus from all the ladies around, who, having finished breakfast, had been listening to his tirade.

"I told you," said Wyversley, highly delighted, "you would repent commencing the attack."

"And by implication," continued Avondale, "we derive the same conclusion from the New Testament. 'There is to be no marriage, or giving in marriage' in the future state, and it is manifestly impossible that this could happen if women are there. It is of the essence of femininity to have the wishes and aspirations, concerned solely with the idea of union with some higher and more perfect being." ("Oh! oh! oh!") "In this world it is, with the great majority, marriage, marriage with the more fully developed fellow mortal; and even when deeper longings seize the soul, and the thoughts turn heavenward, the same end of their existence is recognised—it is still marriage considered under a somewhat different point of view, spiritual marriage—marriage with the Church. It, therefore, plainly follows that in the world to come woman's soul will be either transformed—she won't, in fact, be woman any longer—or it will be absorbed into man's."

"Shame, shame! He is a regular St. Anthony," exclaimed the ladies.

"Right, right!—the exact truth!" said two

or three gentlemen who had been near enough to hear the harangue.

"Many a writer besides, Pagan and Christian, will bear me out in my reasoning," added Avondale, to wind up the argument. "Take Pope, for example. He, you are of course aware, Miss Maddox, was a sworn champion of your sex." ("Oh, Avondale!" objected some of the listeners.) "It is a positive fact, as witness his most pathetic poem—'The Rape of the Lock.' He could not see a lady's chignon filched, even though it were false, and the thief were some love-sick swain, without rowing the fellow for the assault, and assuaging the shock to the damsel's feelings—they had feelings in those days, Miss Maddox, however strange it may sound to modern ears—by a tribute of the muse. Well, this cavalier, so gallant, so chivalrous, such a devoted advocate of woman's claims, speaking of the Indian—so poor, you know, Lady Campion, that he always runs about in dishabille; so untutored that he is firmly convinced there is a God—says that he, arriving at all his conclusions by instinct, which, of course,

cannot go wrong, and not by faulty reasoning, not only depictures

> 'Behind the cloud-capped hill a humble heaven,'

where buffaloes have lost their fleetness, and opossums do not get into his hen-roost or destroy his winter stock of potatoes,

> 'But thinks admitted to that equal sky,
> His faithful dog shall bear him company'—

his dog remember, not his squaw, though undoubtedly said squaw would be of much more service to him in looking after his wigwam and other domestic traps."

"Mr. Avondale, you are an incorrigible slanderer! We won't admit you into our company," exclaimed the ladies.

"And you, Wyversley," said Lady Campion, "are even worse; you have been encouraging him, and enjoying his harangue. I will tell Lady Wharfedale of you."

"So do," replied Wyversley. "Please carry out your threat—I should be so delighted. I should tell her ladyship who began, and I rather think the joke would go against yourself."

The laughter had been so unrestrained that it attracted the attention of Lady Wharfedale at the other end of the table.

"What is the cause? Who is it?" she asked.

Lord Exmoor was sitting on her right hand, and consequently could see Avondale; the latter being on the other side of the table.

"A young man, I think, who is between Wyversley and Miss Maddox. He has a rather pale, well-formed, intellectual face, and a slight moustache—rather taller than Wyversley. He is amusing them all—apparently chaffing either Miss Maddox or Lady Campion."

"It is Ralph's protégé, Mr. Avondale—the genius who is to upset everything and everybody. Don't laugh, it is the truth. The Marquis is particularly anxious you should know him."

"I shall be delighted—indeed, I shall. I know the name already. So do many other people—Percy Mulgrave for instance," he added, with a slight smile.

The speaker, the Marquis of Exmoor, was the eldest son of the Duke of Damnonia. He was nearly forty, as yet unmarried, had been in the House since he came of age; was an easy speaker,

a careful statesman, and a moderate Liberal; in fact, in many points, almost a counterpart of Wharfedale. He was at present a Cabinet Minister—the First Lord of the Admiralty.

The tables were now becoming deserted.

"Shall we move too?" asked the Countess.

Exmoor and those near her rose. Her husband joined them.

"Lord Exmoor wishes to see Mr. Avondale," she said; but while she was speaking that individual and Wyversley came to them to salute the hostess. Wharfedale introduced the two gentlemen.

"I hope," he said to Avondale, "Edwards has properly attended to your comfort. You will, of course, excuse me leaving you somewhat to yourself. I don't know whether you care much for shooting, but if not Wyversley will be your cicerone, and you can easily arrange excursions to the different points. The weather promises to be fine; but if not, I hope that you will find in the library, and picture gallery, and armoury sufficient to interest you for at least one day."

CHAPTER VI.

Several of the visitors were already away on the moors after the grouse. In the hall a group of the others had collected, debating on the day's proceedings. Two or three places were named—Simon's Seat, which the ladies preferred, because the path was so steep, and which the gentlemen objected to for the very same reason. At last they decided in favour of this, by the Marquis observing that the sky was beautifully clear, and they might not again have such an excellent opportunity of getting a view. A fair number went, including the host and hostess, Lady Campion and two of the Misses Maddox, Count Varchi and his wife, and most of the people from town—no tourist is as indefatigable as a genuine cockney, or a man who has been enclosed for six months in the labyrinth of a large city. Few of those who were acquainted with the direct ascent would venture, and of those who did attempt it

two or three—Sir Thomas Maddox one—turned back before they had gone far. It was, indeed, rugged and laborious. Servants attended with ponies for the ladies, but most disdained such aid, and struggled on bravely, assisting rather than assisted by their cavaliers. Miss Maddox punished Avondale for his conduct at breakfast. She asked him to aid her, and then a few minutes later when they came to a peculiarly difficult part, nearly perpendicular and covered with loose stones, she said—

"See, mamma has no one to help her—the Marquis is fully engaged with the Countess Varchi—would you be so kind as to assist her a little? I can walk by myself."

Avondale had thereupon no choice but to take that fair dame in tow. She was fat, fair, and rather more than forty; and he was not without reason somewhat alarmed at the task. But it turned out not so laborious as he had anticipated. Lady Maddox had an Englishwoman's soul, and it would have carried her over greater difficulties than the present. She had come to enjoy herself, and was therefore vivacious and active; and she was much flattered by Avondale's attentions,

of the true cause of which she had not in her innocence the least suspicion. Thus they got along capitally, and were among the first to reach the summit, passing about a mile from the top Wyversley and Miss Maddox, who were sitting down exhausted. Avondale saluted them maliciously—

"A case of blind leading the blind, is it not, Lady Maddox? I'm afraid you are not a good walker, Miss Maddox, and was therefore greatly inclined to offer you, instead of your mother, my assistance."

"Oh, mamma, it is too bad of him. It was I sent him to you."

"Do you hear that, Lady Maddox? How one's reputation gets slandered. Apparently these two young people have been leading a cat and dog life this last half-hour, and they will vent all their spleen on us if we wait any longer. But, Wyversley, how glum you are—will you take a pull at my sherry flask?"

"Miss Maddox will, if I don't. She has been blowing me up because I left mine behind."

"Why you are but a copy of Mr. Avondale.

I have fallen among enemies—even mamma will not say a word in my defence."

"Thanks, Walter," said Wyversley, as he received the flask. "We shall be able to put on a spurt now, and shall catch you before you reach the top."

But they did not, though they made frantic efforts to do so.

Gradually the party came up one by one, and with the last stragglers appeared Sir Thomas Maddox himself, riding an old sure-footed cob. "The castle was so empty," he explained, "that I dreaded dying of sheer loneliness before you returned. So I made them pick out for me one of the steadiest animals in your stables, and here I am. I am overjoyed that I have come—what a magnificent prospect lies around!"

He was right. Magnificent was the only term to be applied to the panorama that stretched on every side. The sky was cloudless, and the atmosphere beautifully transparent, save where leagues to the south the forges of Hallamshire sent up their volumes of smoke. The sun shone hot and scorching on the plains below, but here the fierceness of his beams was tempered by the

north-western breezes that came in from the Atlantic over the lakes and hills of Cumbria.

One single feeling filled every breast, a compound of pleasure, admiration, delight. The host and hostess pointed out the most noticeable spots. "There, right away to the north-east, are the Cleveland Hills, and that, the highest point of them, is Rhosberry Topping, within a few miles of the German Ocean. Between us and them is the great plain, and due east are the Wolds—you see them rolling away till distinctness is lost in distance. York Minster rises up in the midst. Here, Countess, I think you will be able to make it out with this glass—allow me to hold it for you."

"West and north-west is the view I admire most," said Avondale. "In what picturesque confusion those peaks and cairns rise, like vast rocks hurled confusedly together by giant hands. They remind one of the clouds we often see at evening near the horizon, broken into fantastic forms by the winds, where in childhood's days we placed the homes of the genii and the palaces of fairyland."

"It is beautiful, most beautiful," said Lady Campion, who was standing near. "How sharply each rugged crag stands out."

"Grand," "splendid, splendid," "magnificent," were the half suppressed ejaculations that broke from each gazer.

"It is glorious—it is equal to our own Alps," said Countess Varchi.

"I am highly gratified," said the Marquis. "I was certain you would be repaid the difficulty of the journey. Yorkshire is a most interesting county—no other can approach it. Its historical mementoes rival its natural glories. Consider the battles, from Northallerton to Marston Moor, that have been fought on its soil; the Abbeys, Fountains, Jervaultz, Bolton, and the feudal castles whose ruins it contains. See, south of us, a scene rivalling that in other directions—Embsay and Rumbles Moors, and beyond them Bradford, Halifax, Leeds."

Lunch the attendants soon served under a venerable oak that had not improbably seen four centuries earlier the partial destruction of Egremond. It was a joyous meal. Business and politics

and the thousand and one cares incidental to every-day life, seemed forgotten. Each one added to the general happiness.

"Why is this called Simon's Seat?" asked Exmoor of the Marchioness.

"I can't say—I never heard—why is it, Ralph?" she asked, appealing to her husband.

"I am quite as ignorant as yourself; but I believe there is some legend or other accounting for it most satisfactorily. Musty antiquarians, however, who so contemptuously smash up all our pet ideas, assert that the designation comes from one of the Scandinavian heads, Sigmund, who is similarly commemorated on other ridges in England."

"Rumbles," said Avondale. "What a strange term!"

"Yes, rather," replied the Marchioness, smiling. "I believe it is a variation of Romillé."

"You may add," continued her husband, "that the country people explain it differently. They say it was the seat of Giant Rumbald, and they point out to you just over Ben Rhydding a deep dent in the rocks where he once, in stepping across from Almes Cliff, eight miles distant, to

the Moor, stamped his foot, having slightly miscalculated the stride."

"Rather a lengthy step," remarked Exmoor, "and rather a change from the honoured name of Romillé."

"Almost as great a transformation," said Avondale to the Marchioness, "as that of Mulgrave into Muggins by the Dissenting minister, and in both cases the result is slightly unpoetical."

"What was that, if I may presume to ask?" enquired the Viscount.

"Have you not heard?" said the Marchioness.

"No! I am surprised—it is really such a good story," and she gave a short account of Mulgrave's religious meetings, amusing the Minister greatly.

"My honourable friend seems to have fallen regularly into the hands of the Philistines. How his dignity must have been ruffled—but I fear you have somewhat overdrawn the picture."

"Indeed I have not—ask Mr. Avondale."

"Of course Mr. Avondale would be the most credible witness—decidedly so," he replied, laughing.

"It is, however, the unvarnished truth," said Avondale.

CHAPTER VII.

The evening drew on apace. A little past seven they began to descend. Lady Campion and Avondale were taking a final look at the Cumbrian mountains, among whose summits the sun's last rays were lingering, reflected from peak to peak as from so many mirrors, the eastern slopes being thrown into still greater shadow by the contrast, and over which a few fleecy clouds were floating, painted by a magical hand with myriad hues.

"How bright and dazzling it looks," murmured the lady—"like the picture unrolled before a favoured few—the gloom behind, the light ahead, and Paradise above beckoning onwards. While with others—why does God order it so?—how different! Their past is gone as though a dream," her voice sunk very low—"joy and gladness vanished; and the future is misery of misery, the blackness of night uncheered by a solitary beam. Amongst those hills there must

be happiness—and yet everything is deceitful, and the fairer it looks the more deceitful."

Avondale was on dangerous ground, though he knew it not. His heart, as I have said, was sore, but his pain arose from the overthrow of a cherished hope, on the fulfilment of which he had relied too strongly, rather than from the destruction of a deep-rooted love; from the shock inflicted on his self-conceit, rather than from the inconsolable injury done to his affections. A man, however, feels a blow to his vanity quite as sharply and acutely for the time being as one to the all-powerful passion. The difference is that the former passes away and is forgotten in a few weeks or months, the latter not seldom influences the whole tenour of one's subsequent career. Another still more important difference is, that while the latter generally pre-disposes the sufferer against female wiles and female society, the former, as long as the smart remains, renders him doubly susceptible to such influences.

It was so with Avondale. He was vexed, angry, chafing under a slight, and in this state of mind he was thus thrown into the company of a

woman whose character was in so many respects the counter-part of his own. She was his senior in age, but he was far older than his years; and even her age was that very age when women are in the eyes of many most attractive, when they have put off the uncertain glitter or the robust beauty of youth for the matured charms of full womanhood, and yet those charms exhibit no signs of decay, though it may be that they shine as did those of Clare Campion under a chastened light. Both wanted sympathy—she had nothing to cheer her loneliness, no child, no nephew or niece, no younger brother or sister—he had a sister who adored him, and yet what is a sister's devotion compared to that on which the passionate yearning of a man's heart seeks to expend itself?

Avondale was on dangerous ground—he was on still more dangerous ground next morning, when Lady Campion joined him and Wyversley in their ride to Barden Moor—he was on still more dangerous ground when, that afternoon, they went down to the ancient Priory and rambled amongst its romantic ruins, and under its oaks

and ash trees, and when, as they stood by the Strid and gazed into the waters that had so cruelly destroyed a widow's sole stay, she put to him the question the forester, who had attended the lad, put to his mother,—"What is good for a bootless bene?"

CHAPTER VIII.

The following day was wet.

"I am sorry," said the Marquis to Avondale, and some of his other visitors at breakfast, "but you have seen Simon's Seat and the Priory, and the weather is so changeable in these parts that we ought to be thankful for so much. You must ransack the Castle for means to keep off *ennui*, and pray for the 'rain, rain to go away,' which I hope it will do before the day is over."

The letters had just been brought in. Lady Wharfedale looked over hers.

"Excuse me reading this one," she said to Sir Thomas Maddox and Wyversley, who were sitting on her right and left. "It is from Mrs. Reeve; she always has some news. Dear me, this is news. You know Reginald, Killarney lives close by her, near Norwich. Well, his lordship is going to marry."

Wyversley started violently upsetting half a cup of coffee over the reader's dress.

"I beg ten thousand pardons," he said, and as Lady Wharfedale stood up to shake the liquid off, he whispered, "say no more; it concerns Avondale."

The Marchioness was much astonished, and after breakfast learnt, for the first time, from Wyversley the story of the connection between Miss Dawson and his friend. Mrs. Reeve's epistle was to the effect that she had just heard from Killarney's sister, who lived with him, that he contemplated marriage with Miss Dawson, and that the lady's father and brother had been on a visit to him during the last fortnight.

"Arranging the affair rather suddenly, though if it is true, and it is probable enough, it could scarcely come off for another year. Killarney has not known her, at the outside, three months. And what will become of Kate Vendelour?"

"I hope Avondale will have sense enough not to fret over it. The girl who would give up him for a man of Killarney's character and reputation, leaving aside his sixty years—he can't be a day younger – must be utterly void of morality, and even of common sense."

"Thanks, Lady Wharfedale. I am glad to

find that you can say hard things of your own sex. Had I made such an assertion you would have rebutted it with the plea of the necessity of maintaining a good standing in society, and that a girl may as well marry a Title as not, though said Title may have its disadvantages."

"Yes, Reginald, and I should probably have also treated you with a long disquisition on the absurdity of the romance with which young people's heads get filled about love in a cottage, and the like; but I am far from denying the fact that genuine affection can exist between persons of different stations, or between poor people of any station, though, in this, young folks so commonly err; and I should be still farther from asserting that wealth and a Title are a cure for all the ills that trouble humanity. Take yourself, for instance, there is not the slightest need for you to marry either of the daughters of the Earl of Hernthorpe "(God forbid)," but there is all the need in the world that you, or any nobleman, should not follow Lord What's-his-name's example, and select an actress or an opera singer to preside over your house. You must choose some young lady of good position,

Mary Jardine, for example, and the quicker you do so the better."

Rather plain-speaking this. Lady Wharfedale, though she was laughing, was very serious at heart; and Wyversley coloured violently at the allusions. Politeness kept him from expressing his annoyance, and before he could find words to change the subject, Avondale joined them. He saluted the Marchioness.

"I must take advantage of the wet day to scribble a few letters. The last two days have been so delightful that I have found no time to write to any one, not even to acknowledge Edith's note, saying she had reached home safely."

"I am very sorry your sister could not spare us a day or two, but you must bring her with you in the autumn."

"She was very desirous to come now, but my father is a rather moody man, and seldom quits home, and, therefore, as she had been away several weeks she could not remain any longer. She has not, I believe, ever been absent from him so long, and though he conceals his feelings, he loves her most tenderly, and is never so happy as when she is at the Hall."

"He will have to part with her before long," said Wyversley, with a smile.

"*Peut-être*—good morning. I hope to join you at lunch."

Wyversley came into Avondale's room about noon.

"It is dreadfully slow downstairs, Walter, rain, rain, rain. I have been knocking about the billiard balls with Maddox and Varchi till I am tired. The ladies have been lamenting over your disappearance; they want you to go with them over the armoury and picture gallery, and tell them all about the curiosities; they take it for granted you are thoroughly up in the history of Egremond, and I dare say they are not far wrong."

"Yes, presently, Wyversley. Who was it Mrs. Reeve said Killarney was going to marry?"

"What?" said Wyversley, startled, he having hoped his friend had not heard the letter.

"Oh, she mentioned a mere rumour; no one in particular."

"Who was it, Wyversley, if you please?"

"Why will you bother yourself, Walter? You can guess easily enough; but it was only a report,

and even if true you won't let it concern you, I hope. What have you been about here, my dear fellow?" he said, taking up some sheets of paper containing a few lines of blank verse.

"Nothing in particular, to use your own words, but pray don't look at it."

"Pray allow me," and as Avondale offered no great objection, he read the composition through:—

Yes, I am old, and well men call me stern
And cruel, unmerciful, implacable,
And harsh, who never yet a slight forgot
Nor insult left unvenged. And women, too,
That I've no heart, that I'm a man, a thing
They say, heedless of either love or scorn
Untouched by all their skilfullest arts, unmoved
Amid the wildest, gayest scenes of joy
And revelry, where dancing, music, song,
And wine, and beauty's smiles combine in all
Their witchery to captivate and snare
The soul of fickle youth and gravest age
Alike.
And 'tis the truth they speak, for I am cold
And cynical, a hater of my race,
Although I have not always been as now.

Across my haggard brow will often crowd
Faint shadowy gleams of happiness I had
In boyhood's years beyond compare, and then
Come dreams of those drear days in which I drained
The cup of misery to its bitterest dregs,
And then of wanderings with a load of grief
I never could shake off, and then of wealth
Obtained I valued not, and then of fame
And proudest honours won that brought no ease.

Methinks I live my childhood's hours again,
And round my honoured mother's chair I play
A joyous, careless, merry lad, as in that bright
But shortlived time. Oh, I was happy then!
For care and sorrow had not yet been born,
And golden hopes were mine of future bliss,
And glorious thoughts of never dying fame.
And so the smiling vision fades away.

And then another takes its place. A few
Short years have fled, the boy has almost grown
A man in age, and far beyond most men
In energy and thought and intellect.
But not alone the youth fills up the scene,
Another form is there, and 'tis the spring
Of each, when woman's beauty, man's manhood
Know not a flaw, and she the youth's one thought
With wealth of beauty, grace of form, such as
The dying earth but seldom sees, is blessed.
And high ambition urges either on,
To shine above the common lot; for he
Would wrench from out the world's unwilling hands
A diadem and place it on her brows,
The brows of her who is his guiding star;
But she of her most ardent wish had fixed
As bound, the satisfaction that might be
To those who wear the gaudy signs by which
One mob of mankind separate them
From their fellows. And each the other loved.
But hers was more the feeling dull and chill
That queenly women have for those who pay
Them compliments, and yield the homage wealth
And beauty claim; while he to her gave all
That deep, absorbent, yearning love with which
The young and trusting heart but once can glow,
And which in dying leaves a weary void
That never, never can be filled again.

But soon there comes a change and great the change
From the glad scene that flitted last across
My brain; and yet at times I scarce believe
The sight that next arises up before

My memory's gaze can be though changed by time
The same I last beheld. It rather seems
As tho' I had a hideous fantasy.
Two forms again I see, and one in all
Her bridal finery is dressed ; and one
Within a madman's cell is kept. Amidst
A large admiring high-born group the one
Is standing with the flush of pride and rank
And conscious beauty on her cheek, wedded,
But not to whom she pledged her youthful troth,
For absence, slanderous tongues, aye, and far less
Have power when tinselled pomp and state will woo
To render vows forgot and sever hearts
Once knit. The marriage bells are pealing loud,
And flowers scattered round, and as she leans
Upon his arm, her titled husband's arm,
Her lustrous eyes light up with joy to think
Of all the wealth and pleasures that are now
Within her grasp. For though the man whose name
She bears be old, decrepit, vile, diseased
In body as in mind, nathless the sphere,
The sphere that is a universe to her,
In which, henceforward, she will dwell does not
Despise him, and will yield a welcome glad
Unto his wife. And she will now rank with
The herd of fop and fool, rogue and sot,
Whom for their worthlessness the rest of men
Have branded deep with marks indelible
And relegated to a spot apart
Lest their free intermingling should degrade
The entire race. The sun shines bright out of
A cloudless sky where not the slightest check
To happiness unbounded can be seen—
To what she chooses to deem happiness—
Unless, perhaps, a thought of broken vows
May creep into her brain. The other in
His cell with worse than fiend's shrieks and cries
Appals hard men long used to maniacs' shouts.
And makes them cower with a nameless fear ;
But even they dread more to hear the peals
Of laughter, horrid, sickening, demon like

That oft at depth of night burst thro' the air
Followed by rending fits of weeping, yells,
And groans, all intermingled—'twas a sight
To scare the devils, and make angels sad—
My God, what had I done to suffer it?

A wanderer next appears—a proud, austere,
And melancholic being, that vainly seeks
In foreign realms that gently flowing stream
Whereof who takes the smallest draught straightway
Forgets alike the sorrows and the pains
That he has known, and starts with soul renewed,
With freshened vigour, and with strength increased,
Once more along life's labyrinthine path.
Among the arctic wilds he heedless roams,
But they refuse him rest, and will not grant
A grave. Upon the desert plains he treads,
But solitude and peace e'en there cannot
Be found, though death itself is fled. Onwards
Thro' Eastern climes his wayward footsteps lead
Where flourished in the dread mysterious past
Those dim and wondrous empires that have gone,
And scarcely left a trace behind. These lands
Untired he rambles over, marking not
The strange and interesting spots that lie
Around, for they call up no thoughts to calm
His troubled soul; and reptiles, savage beasts,
Men still more savage, all avoid his path.

A flood of light succeeds, as follows oft
After a darksome night the rosy dawn
In garments clad, rich, wavy, thousand hued,
Among whose fleecy folds the zephyrs play.
A brilliant room wherein are gathered all
The varied multitude that flutter near
A monarch's throne—the courtier with his face
Enwreathed in smiles, or wrapped in gloom,
As suits his Sovereign's whim—the fair young cheek
On which not royalty alone delights
To feast its gaze—the siren's witching eye
That lures on to destruction, swift and sure,

And ridicules the ruin it has caused—
The kings of art and music, science, song,
Who deign to attend upon a majesty
Inferior to their own—patrician dames
With lineage pure and high as his whose sway
Their haughty spirits scarce will bend before.
All these and more are there, and through them moves
One statelier, queenlier, far than all beside,
And men and women, falling back, confess
The magic of her beauty, and her mien.
But, as she passes by, men smile and look,
And hint, and shrug their shoulders meaningly,
And women frown and stare, and speak full low,
And sneer; for, by her, walks one who is not
Her husband, or her husband's nearest friend.

The confused roar of camps and war succeeds
As follows oft after a rosy morn
A stormy day, the clouds quick speeding cross
The sky each after each, and if the blast
Sinks from its rage to calm a moment brief,
The rain in whelming torrents pouring down.
The tableaux shift and alter, but one form
Is ever present and conspicuous,
The form of him who has already thrice
Appeared. He has not found the peace he sought;
He has not gained the grave that was the goal
Of early manhood's eagerest, most intense desires.
But now, assuredly, death will haste to give
The meeting long hoped for; and at the thought
His fiery eye a little of its gleam
Abates, and on his cheek is found again
A something of the tint that years ago,
Before the pallor came, becoloured it.
So foremost in the charge he lightly rides,
As one rides to a feast where he will meet
His ladylove, and leader to the breach
He dashes on with headlong eagerness.
But the dread king, though holding revel high,
Will not invite him to the grim repast,
And he whose shadow blights the life that strays

Within its reach, whose glance to stone converts
The unfortunate it falls upon, whose look
Devours all that attempt to brave its glare
As never yet did lava stream devour
A fertile plain of olives, or of vines—
Even he, the king of kings and lord of lords,
Before whose frown shall mind, time, universe
Unto annihilation crumble down,
Fled, fled, from me, from me, for it was I
That reckless central figure filling all
The foreground of the picture, my own self
As henceforth I have been as now I am.

The boy—the maniac—the wanderer—
I was not these. The boy was happy ever,
I too laugh not unfrequent; but his joy
Was highest when his mates partook his bliss,
While mine is most intense when all around
Are writhing 'neath the press of present woe,
And shuddering with the dread of future pangs,
And when one tribe of miserable worms
Are torturing another weaker set.
The maniac, poor fool was mad from love;
I might be mad from hate; he wept and cursed;
I never weep and never curse—the one
Is woman's solace, when her weapon, spite,
Has useless proved, or 'gainst its wielder turned
Its point—the other is the mode by which
The dolts, who lack the courage to resist
And brains to fight, assuage their maudlin ire,
And at the same time trumpet far and wide
Their shame—so asses bray, and monkeys bawl.
The traveller—he longed for death—I
Would live for aye and watch with gloating eye
The world grow old in wickedness and crime,
Till, at the final flare up in one blaze,
Humanity itself, mind, body, soul,
Shall disappear in direst agony
And leave to him who man created, that
He may enjoyment get from mankind's woes,
The chaos, where pain, suffering, sorrow, grief,

Are unknown, because there no life is found
For other life to torture, on pretext,
Of pointing out the way to righteousness.

Folding it up at the end, Wyverslay said—

"Walter, this won't do; you will injure your health, and your prospects, by brooding over this affair. I will not allow you to do so, and had I the least idea what you were about, I would have fetched you down before this."

"I have merely finished it this morning—I can never rest in pure idleness, and, least of all, now—I wrote most of it in Scotland, one wet day. It is poor stuff, but employment eases one's mind a little. Give it me, and I will put it in the fire."

"I won't give it you, as I am not at all certain you would burn it. But promise me you will turn your thoughts to politics, or anything, rather than let them dwell on this person—do oblige me, Walter. And look at the friends you have, and the future before you—promise me to think no more about her. I ask it for your own sake—I ask it as a true friend."

The unusual earnestness with which he spoke moved Avondale greatly—

"You are very kind, Wyversley. If you would only be as much concerned for your own welfare, you would have a much more glorious career than I. I will give you the promise you ask; and, indeed, I begin to doubt whether I have not mistaken my own feelings—it is not so much grief that I feel, as it is pure, downright chagrin, and vexation."

"I hope it is—you will soon get over it."

"Probably so; but I freely confess that at present I am extremely sore on the subject."

CHAPTER IX.

After lunch they went over the Castle. In the armoury was a fine collection of ancient means of offence and defence, coats of mail, suits of armour, some steel, some inlaid with silver, others set off with gold, battle axes and maces, spears, and long and cross bows.

"What quaint devices are on some of the shields," said the Italian lady—"griffins and dragons, and giants. Your English knights were always rough and turbulent."

"As you would imply we are now," said Exmoor. "We ought duly to acknowledge the compliment."

"But is it not the case?"

"I believe you are correct, Countess," assented Wharfedale. "I fear our ancestors had little of the light and grace that Matthew Arnold so earnestly contends for as necessary to make up the full measure of a man. But, really, your

own flowers of chivalry were not more amiable creatures, as witness the wars of the Italian republics, the struggle between Spain and Naples, the Vendettos of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, the sack of Rome, by the Imperialists, when—

'The black bands came over the Alps, and their snow,
With Bourbon the rover they crossed the broad Po!' "

"That is not exactly what I mean. I do not deny that the Italians of the middle ages, high and low alike, were quite as unmerciful as other nations, perhaps more revengeful and pitiless, but their cruelty was characterised by a certain degree of refinement, compared with the sheer brutality of more northern races." ("Ugh—I willingly give them credit for that," said the Marquis.) "But neither was it to their relative humanity I was alluding. I was going to observe that our paladins so generally adopted as devices flowers instead of animals—the lily, the rose, the mignionette, the laurel—or simple stars, and crosses, and chevrons. If they took animals, it was such as actually exist, not objects looking hideous, and breathing flame, and so on."

"Quite an historical disquisition," observed Exmoor, smiling.

"By the by," said the Marchioness, "I have two or three times intended to ask you, Mr. Avondale, to decipher your arms. I gave it to Clare, the other day, for her album, but was utterly at a loss to explain it when she asked me."

"I thought it was clear enough."

"Oh, no, it it is not—the allusions, of course, I mean. The crest is a broken crown, and over it '*fuimus*'—what does that signify?"

"I believe," replied Avondale, "it refers to the Saxon Kings, from whom Lyddonshire legends trace the descent of the Avondale, 'the middle-class man,' you know, Lady Wharfedale."

"I never said that, sir. Ralph," to her husband. "Ralph, are you aware that we have royalty in our midst?"

"Not at all—when did you make this discovery, my dear?"

"Only this minute." She told him the circumstance—"We ought to run up the grand standard." Then to Avondale—"The horses in the shield, and that piece of holly, or whatever it is, between them?"

"It is a branch of mistletoe," replied Avon-

dale, laughing. "It is in allusion to the British origin of our house. The first part of our name is a British word. Lyddon itself is British—the great district of the Druids—it seems to have been their sacred land, and the Dunnon Hills, far to the south, a kind of Olympus. Several of the peaks are named after Teutates, one of their Gods, corresponding to the Latin Mercury. Over against Morton Grange, many years ago one of our houses, is Pen Toot, *the* hill *par excellence*, where, no doubt, many a miserable mortal was burnt alive, and where, down to a recent date, young people went a-maying."

"You are quite an antiquarian, Avondale," said the Marquis. "And the horses—why have you those? I am extremely interested."

"For the same reason—if it is any reason at all—as the broken crown—in allusion to the white horse, the national ensign of the Saxons."

"And the motto over the crest—'*fuimus?*'"

"The Avondale in the reign of Henry VIII. added that, after the dissolution of the monasteries. The Royal commission seized on much of his land, under pretence that it belonged to

the Abbey of Fairlieu, and as he was a Yorkist and not a courtier he could get no redress."

"Strange," said the Marquis, "that your history, in that respect at least, should be so much like our own. We were great losers by being on the Yorkish side in the Wars of the Roses, but Henry VIII., in a whim, restored some of the land to Baron Dacre, the second founder of the family."

"Yours had not very probably got so firmly into the grip of the *novi homines* that then sprang up. In Lyddonshire they have a doggrel—

> "Popworth, Homan, Rystle, and Vrynne,
> When the monks popped out, they popped in—
> They popped in and took well nigh all
> The lands that belonged to A'nd'le Hall."

"Your neighbourhood must be quite romantic. I should like to see it; you must get Mr. Avondale to send me an invitation."

"You would enjoy yourself very much, Wharfedale," said Exmoor, who had just joined them. "I have been to Sir Charles Popworth's several times, and have heard him quote the lines Mr. Avondale has this minute given. The

Countess de Varchi and I have been having a debate about a suit of armour in that corner. Will you come and decide the question for us?"

They crossed the room; Wharfedale resolved the difficulty, and added—

"The suit is that which was worn at Towton by the young Earl, the son of him who was murdered at Wakefield. I dare say that battle was too far north for any of your family to have joined in it, Avondale?"

"Not quite, Sir. Avondale Church contains the effigy of Sir Walter Avondale, who was slain on Tadcaster Moor."

"How very remarkable! For ought we know, he may be one of the six knights who were buried in the chapel. They were gentlemen who fought with the Egremond retainers, and as they came from a distance, the Countess caused them to be placed side by side with her deceased husband in the chapel. When it was rebuilt the brasses and monumental slabs in the floor were all religiously preserved, but I fear the inscriptions have, from wear and tear, become illegible. You must, however, try to decipher them."

The interest excited by these glimpses of the past history of the Avondale family augured ill for Lady Campion's peace of mind. She had been one of the number who examined the armoury, and had listened to all the conversation with an eagerness she seldom felt, and could not account for. She did not see the precipice which she was unconsciously approaching; and, had her nearest friend presumed to offer her a hint and a caution of the same, she would have indignantly repudiated the insinuation. Walter Avondale was a young man whose name was unknown to her four months ago, and with whom she had been personally acquainted barely half so long. He had genius, talent, capacity, but what of that, though her husband, the choice, not the love of her youth, was a dolt and a boor; and what if his—whose?—future was opening brilliant, while hers lay already unrolled before her, a waste, void, unchanging desert? He had obtained some little reputation, and had aroused in society much interest; and it was not surprising that she, too, felt some interest in his welfare. Interest? It was, though she would not own it, and dared not question her own heart, the yearn-

ing, the anxiety, the love that women have for those with whose very being their own is entwined. Some? It was daily, hourly, growing more and more absorbing and devouring.

CHAPTER X.

Next day was fine. Wyversley, Avondale, and others went over the grounds and visited the islands and the ruined oratory on the lake. After lunch, Lady Wharfedale congratulated Wyversley on his new qualification.

"How long have you been a poet, Reginald?"

"I? What do you mean? I am completely in the dark."

"You were reading the 'Princess' last night."

"Sleeping over it."

"Sleeping over it, then; I was rather surprised at your reading it at all. This morning I went into the library—I may remark I was not surprised to find your writing desk on one of the tables" ("I am so sorry—I cannot help leaving things about"), "with a litter of letters and paper scattered over it, and 'Tennyson' lying by. I locked the desk and sent it to your room; and taking up the poet I was extremely surprised to

find these in it. Look at them, Lady Campion—he must be quite heart-broken. I should not have given you credit for so much feeling."

"Bother it," exclaimed Wyversley; "my stupidity again. I did not write those lines, it was—"

He stopped, for he was at bottom more afraid of the result of Avondale's intimacy with Lady Campion than he cared to own, and he was assured that the present occurrence would not contribute to break off that intimacy. He would willingly have pleaded guilty to the offence if he could have withdrawn the denial he had just made, but it was too late. Lady Wharfedale finished the sentence for him—

"It was Mr. Avondale. I am so sorry, we must not laugh at him; but he is not serious."

"No; I should say not. Don't let him know you have seen the lines. I promised to put them in the fire."

"Were you not doing me the honour of mentioning my name?" asked Avondale, coming from the window where he had been standing with Sir Edward Maddox.

"Yes; I believe so," replied Wyversley.

"We have been talking about driving down to the Abbey again this afternoon"—not altogether a white lie, as this had been proposed at lunch.

"The very thing. Sir Thomas wishes to see it again, and so does Miss Maddox; and I dare say their mamma would not object. They go back to town next Monday or Tuesday, you know."

"Agreed," said Wyversley, "if you ladies have no objection."

"None, whatever."

So they went once more to the stately Priory. The same evening Sir Hugh Campion reached the Towers. He seldom stayed there more than a day or two, as it was far too solemn and dignified for his taste. The following day, Saturday, they made an excursion to Ilkley and Ben Rhyddy, and explored the cliffs, and visited one of the hydropathic establishments.

Monday and Tuesday most of the visitors took their departure.

Tuesday evening Avondale had a long conversation with the Marquis, when they finally sketched out their future arrangements. The

Marquis promised to return early in October, and to carefully set about forming a party before the commencement of next session; he to take upon himself the responsibility and to appear as the prime mover, Avondale to direct the hidden currents and to labour assiduously at cementing the whole. He had sounded Exmoor, but that nobleman, though not a firm adherent of the present Premier, was desirous to give him fair scope, and to see how his colleagues could work together; and under any circumstance he (Exmoor) was unwilling to discuss politics till after some weeks' leisure and reviving.

"It won't, however, be difficult," said Wharfedale, "to secure him in the autumn. That fellow Sloe will set the whole Cabinet by the ears by the time he has made half a score of speeches to his admiring constituents; and when he has done this, not only Exmoor, but Kelley, Williams, Edmunds, and Pilgrim, will come over."

Avondale left next morning. Mr. Jardine, with Mary and Stuart, joined him the following Saturday at Avondale, on which same day the Marquis and Lady Wharfedale, and the Countess of Wyversley and her son reached Maggiore.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Jardine was highly delighted with Lyddonshire, so was Mary Jardine; and so it need scarcely be added was her brother, his enjoyment intensified by that feeling towards Edith Avondale, which was altogether new to him, and which was growing stronger and stronger day by day, and becoming more and more a part of his own existence.

The two girls were inseparable, and Stuart, as often as he could find an excuse, was with them. They rode and rambled about the neighbourhood. From the top of the slight elevation at the back of the hall a good view can be obtained of the vale of the Avon, and the country for some miles around.

"Whose house is that away yonder?" asked Mary Jardine.

"It is Brentwood, the seat of my god-father, Mr. Vrynne," replied Edith. "We will go there

some day—the grounds are fine, well worth seeing; but I am sorry he is not at home. He is gone to Italy with his daughter, his only child, Florence. I am so sorry, as I wished you to know her—so very sorry."

She was sorry, but on her brother's account; and could she have guessed the circumstances surrounding her brother, that sorrow would not have been lessened. She and Florence had been close friends from girlhood, as their fathers had been from early life, and both had lost their mothers in infancy.

Mr. Vrynne admired Walter Avondale, encouraged his visits, and would probably have been perfectly ready to receive him as his son-in-law.

They made up a merry pic-nic a few days after, and visited the grounds of Brentwood House. The gate-keeper acted as their guide. He was a grey-haired man, who had lived the whole of his seventy years on the estate, and was well versed in the numerous legends of the neighbourhood.

"Brentwood, Miss," in reply to Mary Jardine. "We call it Burntwood. A great wood in old

times stretched all along the side of this hill and across the valley, from Repton Sheepsleight, away yon to the downs over A'nhead, twenty miles long by six or seven wide; and the Danes burnt it all afore one of the battles."

And the old man went on describing to Miss Jardine the house and grounds, pointing out the matters of interest, and narrating the local legends.

Altogether the visit to Brentwood and the picnic was very enjoyable. Stuart Jardine, however, with the strange selfishness of humanity, was annoyed because Edith Avondale was surrounded by attendants, for each of whom she had a smile; and still more so, because of her intimacy with Charles Vrynne, a distant offshoot of her godfather's family, with whom she danced in preference, at least so he thought, to himself. He was very moody all the way back, though the rest of the company were in the highest spirits. On his sister rallying him, he confessed to her the cause, but she only laughed at him, which did not mend matters; and he took himself off to bed aggrieved and melancholy, hugging his bitter fancies, disgusted with the fickleness of miserable humanity,

and deeming himself the most injured being on the face of the globe.

Strange how a jaundiced eye will contrive to see everything wrongly, and how the mind, when sharpened by affection or warped by suspicion, will put a false construction on the simplest actions.

Thus it happened with Jardine. He had fallen deeply in love with Edith Avondale, though doubtless it was extremely absurd of him on an acquaintance, whose length was measured by hours, to have lost his heart; and it was still more absurd of him to have lost his head and intellect at the same time.

But so it was, and so it ever has been. The most nervously jealous, the most sensitive to slights are the young people whose love is an absorbing passion, springing into full growth at first sight, and taking firm root in a heart hitherto untouched. Their world is limited to the one object of their thoughts, and if but a smile, a look, a glance is bestowed by that object on another they are seized with the biting pains. Alternately elevated to the height of happiness, and plunged in the depths of despair, their

existence is a charming vicissitude of maddening bliss and darkest misery—or they imagine it is, which is much the same—till their hopes and fears alike are swallowed up in enjoyment, or in the torture of disappointment.

Jardine brooded over his trials and his wretchedness, and contrived most successfully to intensify them.

The Newbury flower show came off early in September—one of the annual festivities of North Lyddonshire, to which many go, the rich to patronise the fête, and others to enjoy themselves. Vrynne accompanied the Avondales. He coolly attached himself to Edith as her cavalier, displacing Charles Popworth—though the baronet said, "Ah, Vrynne, if I were a younger man you could not cut me out"—and many others who were fluttering around, among them Stuart Jardine, who, incontinently wrapping himself up in his own grandeur, stalked by the side of another visitor. He was somewhat absent, it is true, and he astonished his companion considerably by replying to her remark in reference to a collection of potatoes, and onions, and carrots in one of the cottage tents, that they

were very fine—"Yes, they smell beautifully." They had a dance after on a friend's lawn—they wind up everything with a dance in Lyddonshire—but he carefully avoided Edith, and would not even join in till Lady Popworth said she wished to dance, and if he did not ask her she would ask his father. His sister blew him up soundly for his conduct that evening, but he told her to mind her own business, not to trouble about him, nobody cared about him—poor fellow!

"But, anyhow, you can show common politeness, Stuart. You were quite rude to Lady Popworth to-day."

However, he liked Mr. Avondale's covers and the shooting well enough, and did not shoot himself or any one else; he ate and drank heartily, his health was not affected, and in most respects he comported himself as a sane and well-behaved Christian.

CHAPTER XII.

JARDINE went from bad to worse. A few days later Sir Charles Popworth's eldest son came of age. Festivities in the usual country style commemorated the event—dinners for everybody, bonfires in the evening, and later a ball, with invitations to half the county.

The Avondales were there, and Vrynne danced with Edith, and what seemed so often to Stuart Jardine—twice—that after making one effort to secure her hand, when it happened she was engaged, he carefully avoided her for the rest of the evening, and stalked through the festive throng with a countenance as expressive of pleasure as is that of a Red Indian when on his way to the stake. Walter noticed him, and was much annoyed at his perversity.

"Well, Stuart, don't you intend to tread even one measure with Edith?" he inquired.

"I fear, Avondale," he replied, with tremendous coolness, "that Miss Avondale is already engaged. I have asked her several times."

"Stuart," said his sister to him next morning as they were on the lawn before breakfast, "if you don't apologise to Edith before the day is over for your incivility to her last night, I will ask papa to send you off home."

"Incivility! what do you mean?"

"Mean? Why, that you behaved as if you were utterly devoid of politeness and good breeding. Everybody remarked it, and I almost cried about it. You, a visitor here, and not to have asked Edith to dance with you!"

"I did ask her several times."

"Several! how many? You asked her once, when I was standing by, and I don't believe you spoke to her again."

"And if I did not, what difference does it make? She did not trouble about it."

"Very likely not. It would be rather absurd for one person to trouble about another's ill-humour. But, anyhow, she missed three dances because you did not ask her, and would have missed another if Lord Whatcombe had not said

he should not allow her to be a wall flower any longer."

"Missed them because Vrynne did not ask her. He was dancing with her all the while."

"That is not true, you know it is not. Mr. Vrynne danced with her but three times, and no wonder if it had been much oftener—you have heard they have been as it were brought up together. But if you had not been perfectly blind you would have seen that he was much more attentive to Miss Alice Popworth."

"Oh, yes, of course. A fellow is always blind because he won't be humbugged."

"Humbugged, Stuart! That is a most objectionable word at the best of times—it is very vulgar, and I wish you would not use it. You are a perfect noodle, that's the whole of it. I will write to mamma, and will tell papa—"

"What is that you will tell, papa?" asked Mr. Jardine coming through the laurels. "You are rather excited, Polly. I heard your voice twenty yards off."

"About Stuart's ill manners, papa. You must have observed his rudeness and cross temper last night."

"Yes, I did observe it, and was sorry to think Master Stuart was behaving so stupidly."

"I have being telling him the same, but he considers his conduct perfectly excellent and becoming. He is as obstinate as a—a—a—"

"A donkey, Polly" suggested her father.

"Just so, papa."

"But he is quite old enough to know his own mind, and if he loses the chance of getting a good wife he must blame no one but himself. We are keeping breakfast waiting—come on; perhaps this moody young gentleman will follow."

"I hope he won't, unless he is going to apologise to Edith."

Stuart did apologise, but it was in a half grumbling tone; and Edith consequently snubbed his advances most unmercifully. He told the result to his sister. "Served you right, too," was her annotation. The visit drew to an end. Mary Jardine and her father enjoyed themselves to the full. The two girls were inseparable. They had examined every corner of the Avondale grounds. They had ransacked the old hall and turned out its curiosities—the ancient armour, the piece of

the true cross which had been brought from Palestine, and which, when thrown by Fairfax into the fire could not be burnt, the two or three secret passages, the manor rolls, and other relics of the past. They had scanned the brasses and monuments in the little Saxon church at Avondale till Mary was as familiar with them as Edith.

They had gone to the giant oak on Tutcombe Hill, and 'neath its vast shade had mused over the time when the rough hewn stones around them were an altar on which human victims were burnt, and of which the Avondales mayhap were the high-priests. It was the last Wednesday. "You must forgive Stuart," pleaded Mary. "If you don't care for him, don't at least let him go without one kind word. He was so anxious to come here, and now it is nothing but his jealousy has made him behave so stupidly."

"But he has no right to be jealous," objected Edith. "I have not known him many weeks."

"I know that, but he has never been jealous about any one before."

"And he has much less reason to be stupid and unpolite."

"I know that, too, but he was not stupid or

unpolite in Scotland. Poor Stuart, his brain is half turned, I think."

"Poor fellow, he must be in a bad state. Well, what shall I give him? I will get a piece of this mistletoe—you know it is our emblem, and will remind him of Lyddonshire—and if he is good to-morrow at Mrs. Vrynne's, I will give it him. He has been better the last two or three days."

Vyrnne had not troubled the waters since the preceding Saturday, perhaps this was partly the reason. On the Sunday they had attended service at Newbury Cathedral, with Jardine as their sole cavalier, and had had a very pleasant day. Altogether his prospects, so very gloomy a short week since, seemed to have taken a different appearance, and he was consequently highly elated, and in a much better humour.

"Yes, he has been so," replied Mary. "Our visit to the Cathedral last Sunday, and the fine day, has greatly improved him. But how shall we get the mistletoe?"

"There is a twig only a few feet above us."

This difficulty they solved by the aid of a long pole.

A croquet party at Mrs. Vrynne's followed the next day. Stuart had determined to shake off the demon that possessed him, and he succeeded remarkably well, and the more he succeeded the more it seemed to him that Vrynne's attentions were not exclusively devoted to Miss Avondale.

"How devoted Vrynne is to Miss Popworth," he remarked to Edith. "Quite her cavalier."

"Of course he is," she replied maliciously. "Charley is a capital fellow—always so polite and gentlemanly to every one."

Stuart's brow darkened, and he growled. "Oh, yes. Women always say that of any empty headed fellow who will chatter and talk to them."

"But Charley is not empty-headed; he has just taken an excellent degree, and will have a fellowship soon."

"Degrees and fellowships are no real tests of one's fitness for active life. They often make a man thoroughly conceited and affected. I am glad I did not get a good degree, though you need not have reminded me of it."

"I did not remind you of it, sir," she said sharply. "Charley is not conceited or affected. And I have no doubt he will show himself at

least as well fitted for the real business of life as those who spend years at cricket and billiards." Her cheek was flushed, then seeing how genuinely sorry Stuart seemed, she added—"But you must be quite blind. Charley's attentions to Alice Popworth are not dictated by politeness merely."

Stuart started. "Oh, Miss Avondale, is it so—is it the truth?"

"Better ask him," she said tartly.

He did not ask him; but he was very humble, and next morning, catching Edith in the library early, he apologised to her very sincerely. "I have been very thick-headed—"

But she would not allow him to go on,—"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Jardine; you have made no mistake, you have only been excessively rude."

"Miss Avondale," he groaned, "I have been very rude, but I wish I had made a mistake, too. You will pardon me, I trust."

"An ill-mannered person has to ask pardon of himself chiefly."

"And won't you give me something as a keep-sake—anything, however small. It is presumptuous of me to ask you, but I am so sad."

"I dare say. I did intend to give you this piece of mistletoe," pulling it out of her pocket. "Mary and I got it on Wednesday, but you don't deserve it."

"I really have been thoroughly miserable, Miss Edith. I have, indeed."

And then he expressed himself so very contrite, and begged her at least to excuse his unpoliteness, that she consented to this, and he followed up his success by taking the mistletoe from not unwilling hands.

The rest of the visit sped away quickly and pleasantly to all, doubly so to Stuart Jardine. He saw nothing of the Dawsons, who were on the Continent. Avondale he accompanied to most of the local meetings, in particular to a big dinner at Newbury, to celebrate some town improvements, whereat Avondale's health, proposed by Sir Charles Popworth, with the hope that he would soon be member for the county, was drunk with an enthusiasm that augured well for his success, should he attempt to realise the hope.

BOOK IV.

CLARE CAMPION.

CLARE CAMPION.

CHAPTER I.

At Egremond Towers again. Avondale's vacation had come to an end, though it was not yet the middle of October. He had spent a few days with the Earl of Wyversley in Nottinghamshire, but their pleasure had been marred by continued rain. The Countess had heard very much of him. from both Ravenshurst and the Wharfedales. The former had spoken rather disparagingly, deeming him to be an ambitious schemer plotting for his own ends, but the latter, from closer acquaintance and better knowledge, had formed a very different opinion; and the Countess, ere his visit was over, had come to a like favourable conclusion.

He was refreshed in body and mind. He had not forgotten Miss Dawson, but he had ceased to think of her—for the simple reason that she had

gone on the Continent instead of returning to Lyddonshire, and so had been absent from sight and memory, and that he had himself been fully occupied while at home. His sister, too, had been most careful to prevent any allusion being made to this lady, and, on the other hand, to awaken in her brother's breast an interest for Miss Vrynne. With her she kept up a constant correspondence, hearing from her at least twice a week, and sending her, in return, all the news of the neighbourhood. The letters she always tossed over to Walter, on the pretence that he would, of course, like to hear of the peregrinations of Mr. Vrynne, but in the hope that it would be those of Mr. Vrynne's daughter in which he would be chiefly concerned. She often spoke of him, but it was with the frankness of close and long-continued intimacy; and so Avondale himself thought—that is, as far as he thought at all about it.

He generally handed back the letters with the brief remark, "How they are enjoying themselves!" or, "What a beautiful place Lausanne, or Chillon, or Lugano, or Como is; we must go there next summer, Edith." "And they have seen

Lady Wharfedale and Wyversley; I wish they had made each other's acquaintance;" and so on.

One passage struck him at the time—"I am so much obliged to you for the paper. I am sorry we have come away; I should so like to have been at the ball. Walter is becoming quite a great man. We have been talking very much about him. Papa is highly pleased with his speech at the dinner, and hopes he will get into Parliament soon. I hope he will put up for the county some day. I am sure he would succeed, for he would have so many friends; and it would be so nice."

As he read this, Avondale experienced a misty glimmering of what might be, but he had so long known the writer that it was only a shadow, which passed away even before he perceived it. All his thoughts were henceforth to be directed to the one cherished object—the formation of a political party. This, this alone, would, he fondly imagined, give him entire occupation, to the exclusion of every other subject.

Many have had a similar belief. They have asserted to others, and falsely pretended to be assured themselves, that ambition, glory, fame

can be the sole and final aim of all their labours. This they have asserted loudly and vociferously, and thus have stilled for the moment the cry of their nature, and have deadened the yearning of their soul, till the cry has risen again, changed into the cynic's sneer or the tyrant's menace, and the yearning that erst sought sympathy has been supplanted by the contempt of him who knows no fellows and discredits the very existence of goodness and mercy.

The human spirit is not single, but compound. It is a couple. Neither of its elements is perfect of itself; neither is completely developed. True enough that many a man—and, perhaps, though doubtful, some women—may pass through life without becoming aware of any deficiency, without thinking that anything is wanting to make up the full measure of their being.

Avondale had laboured under such a delusion till Miss Dawson's fickleness had awakened him. He was, as we know, at first very much pained at the sudden withdrawal of the support on which he had unconsciously leant; he had next been even more vexed at the blow inflicted on his own estimation of himself. But both sentiments

had, thanks to some weeks' residence with friends, entirely left him, and the slight scars were almost healed. He was restored to himself. He had learned by experience. He had before him a goal which would demand his utmost exertions. He had thus such ample employment for his brain as would allow no relaxation for less manly concerns.

He despised women; or, at least, their littleness of intellect, their sentimentalism, their petty quarrels. So he told himself again and again. He had never been really in love, and never should be—he who had been brought up in seclusion, who had been a scholar among scholars and a man among men! This was a postulate equally unimpeachable. And he was now once more at Egremond, to be continually mingling with women young, beautiful, witty—to be often in the company of Clare Campion—and he should not fall in love; and politics would engage his sole attention. Just so.

CHAPTER II.

The Towers filled rapidly after the return of the family. The grouse had been somewhat thinned in August, but there still remained not a few birds, while the covers were crowded with pheasants—too much so for real sport.

One of the earliest arrivals was FitzHenry.

"You are wonderfully improved in health," he said to Avondale. "Ready for the Waterbridge Commission yet?"

"I believe so," replied Avondale.

"That is more than the other side can say, then. I was down there the other day. I was staying at Calidaqua, and ran over to see Rosse and Taylor. It is a fine story they will have for Grim Growler and Co. If they prove half of it, we shall have something to enliven this dull season."

"Enough to keep in full work the whole morality side of the 'Times' and 'Morning Mercury.'"

"Yes; your committee are highly satisfied with the three Commissioners. Grim Growler's reputation has, it seems, already preceded him, and the other side are quaking with dread of the wrath to come. One of the solicitors has levanted. Mr. Broadcloth is ailing, and has taken to his bed. He is terrified with the ghosts of a certain document in Mr. Rosse's possession. The whole place is as alarmed as though the French or the cholera were bearing down upon them. They are learning off their respective parts by rote; and I should not be surprised if some of them were hatching some plot against yourself. I hope you will be prepared."

"Are not Starrett and Percy Mulgrave compromised?" asked Wharfedale. "I have heard ugly rumours about perjury, and so forth, before the committee. I sincerely hope, for Mulgrave's sake, they are not true."

"There are rumours, and something more than that, according to what Rosse told me. Johnson held them both innocent of personal bribery. I believe Avondale's committee will bring home personal bribery to Starrett—at least, they have very strong proofs. In case of Mul-

grave, it is different. He, probably, did not bribe personally; but he so trusted his lawyers and agents, he so entirely put himself into the hands of his committee, and he mingled so much with the voters that his acts, and those of his chief adherents, will be confused, and he may be condemned for what he is innocent of."

"It will be a source of the greatest vexation to the Ministry before it is settled," said the Marquis. "Maitland must almost wish he had left Mulgrave at the Foreign Office."

"I should think so," said Avondale. "Then Sloe's performances lately can be scarcely more to his liking. They have been amusing from their very bumptiousness. Did you read his speech to his loving constituents and subjects at the annual meeting of the Shodditon and Diddleham Amalgamated Society of Short Weights and Never-give-trust? How he said his colleagues formed the bony skeleton, necessary as a framework, but utterly unable to exert itself, to which he and his principles gave flesh, and life, and vigour?"

"Rather taller talk than one would have given even him credit for. On the same occasion he let out

strongly against our foreign policy, and gave a rather decided opinion of Bayswater's abilities. I met the Duke at Venice. He was very savage, and it required but little rubbing to get him into a towering rage."

"It was really ungrateful of Sloe," said Fitz-Henry. "Bayswater has already apologised twice in the Lords for his Radical colleague's escapades."

"So he complained; and he declared he would have put that duty on me if I had remained with them."

"Besides," continued Avondale, "Bayswater is getting along very tolerably with America. If he has not yet settled the quarrel, he has, at least, given it a much better form than it had when Garmouth left the Foreign Office for the Premiership."

"How about Exmoor?" asked FitzHenry. "You had him here in August."

"Cannot say. I tried him, but he won't desert yet. I imagine, however, Sole's indiscretion will disgust him considerably. He will be here in a fortnight or so. The Duke of Strathclyde will come at the beginning of next week,

and if we get him, we can get Exmoor and his family next. I shall have a grand durbar to flatter Strathclyde's pomp, and, when we have put the whole affair well in train, I shall hand him over to you, Avondale."

"Thanks, but I fear I shall not do justice to your intention. I think, however, the affair is already well in train—to use your own words. You know that Bayndon makes the Admiralty his hobby, and the waste there his pet grievance; that, in fact, he wants to be first lord; his speeches all tend to that direction, and I fancy Maitland does not discourage him, and Sloe, his dear friend. Since the close of the Session he has been riding his horse on several occasions; he was at Shodditon with his brother-in-law, Sloe, and they buttered each other amazingly. I met him just after at Wyversley, and congratulated him on his exertions. I praised his patriotism. I got him a whole day by myself on Langbury Common—agreed that the expenditure was enormous, and ought to be curtailed; hinted that it wanted a person of his breadth of mind to take charge of the department, and ventured to surmise that probably Mr. Jardine would be glad

to give his active support to the Ministry, if he saw they were really on a course of retrenchment. He was delighted with my remarks. I made good use of the opportunity, and had persuaded him, before the day was over, that he was the individual destined by Providence for the salvation of England. He went from Wyversley to Maitland's. Next Saturday he meets his constituents at Grantham, to account for his proceedings during the late Session—all those Rads do that, considering it as a part of their duty—and I shall be greatly surprised if his grandiloquence does not lead to the resignation of Exmoor. The more so, as that cad, Muddler, who is Exmoor's especial abomination, is the second member for the borough. The two together, let them once begin preaching less expenditure, will make a nice hash of it before they conclude."

"Well, FitzHenry," said the Marquis, with a smile, when Avondale had finished, "what do you think of this new proof of Avondale's diplomacy?" And, then, without waiting for an answer, he added—"By the by, there's Pilgrim; have you heard anything of him?"

"Yes; I met him at Biarritz. He came the day before we left; we went on through the North of Spain to Corunna. I saw him but for a few minutes in the evening. He was terribly tacit on political matters—not over-much pleased with his associates, I think."

"We must get him here before Christmas. It is absolutely necessary to withdraw him from the Government. Can you not devise some plan, Avondale?"

"We must trust in the fates and Maitland's perversity," said Avondale. "Church and State is the shoal on which the Ministerial vessel will stick, if it not altogether become stranded. To lighten it and get afloat again, some of the heavier passengers must be thrown overboard—if, indeed, they have not previously, on first catching sight of the light-house's warning glare, abandoned it, and taken refuge in the nearest friendly craft. Sir Edward Pilgrim will be one, Herbert Williams another, Sir George Edmunds a third of these."

"You hit the exact men," said FitzHenry. "You may add that Rowe and Kelley are certain to split on the Budget, and that Tintern won't

serve long under Blocke Head. The first time the latter lets off a man who has committed only two murders, because his great grandmother was once at an execution, and, therefore, her descendants to all generations may be tainted with a mania for crime; while he makes a half-starved woman blessed with half-a-dozen hungry children and a drunken brute of a husband, serve out her three months for stealing five small potatoes, value one penny—the first time this happens Lord Tintern will bid the Home Office adieu."

"So I should imagine," said Wharfedale, laughing. "Well, Avondale, there is your work cut out for you. FitzHenry and myself and Jardine will perform our share of it, but it is on your shoulders that much of the really laborious and irksome part of the enterprise will fall. You must attend to the minutiæ, must look after the trivial, though highly important matters of detail; must devote yourself to smoothing the roads, and clearing away difficulties so that we can perform our evolutions unimpeded."

"How do you relish the prospect, Avondale?"

asked Fitz Henry, with a smile. "The Marquis is putting it pretty plainly before you."

"Very much—*experientia docet*," replied Avondale. "I presume that you yourself spent many a long hour under the bar over wearisome reports and cases, and in drawing and redrawing declarations which were summarily obliterated by the man whom you read as bad."

"I believe so; and you may add that when called I still found for several years plenty of vacant time to do the same."

"It is the same with most men," said Wharfedale. "The more brilliant their success in middle-age, the more unremitting were their exertions in youth. But, apart from this and the service it may be to Avondale to have occupation which will develop and strengthen his character, some one must act as manager, secretary, superintendent, or whatever he may be called—some one must have *carte blanche* to enter into engagements on behalf of the others. It is utterly out of the question, FitzHenry, that you could take such responsibility. My time will be scarcely less occupied than your own. I suppose the decisive struggle will come off before

Easter; till then my guests will demand all my attentions. Jardine, of course, will have no more leisure. He must have a vast deal to do with his scattered estates alone; if he is to render adequate assistance, his other spare moments will be completely filled up with preparing materials for an attack on the Colonial Administration of the Government—this, of course, will be his special department."

"You forget," said Avondale, "that Wyversley will be of some service."

"I trust he may," replied the Marquis, "but you will have to revolutionise him first—rather a difficult operation, I fear. However, Exmoor will, if we can detach him, be your *alter ego*. But, come, our confab has lasted long enough. The visitors will be enquiring for us directly."

CHAPTER III.

"Reginald is decidedly changing," said the Marchioness one day to her husband. "I went into his sitting-room this morning. He had 'Hallam' and 'May' on the table, and a heap of memoranda lying by. See, here is a list of Ministries during the last century. Where could he have obtained it?"

"I have no idea; I should not myself know where to find them, unless in some series of almanacks or something of the kind. I have noticed that he is changing, or, at least, fancied so. Avondale, I suppose, is the cause. That young man must to a certainty become famous. He has capacity far beyond the common, and, what is better than all the bosh about genius, a vast amount of pluck, perseverance, energy?"

"Just the three points in which most of the young men of the times are wanting. Look at Talbot, Stansville, Brayclift—all too indolent to

make any use of the opportunities showered upon them."

"The first two are dolts, or rather cowards, unfitted for this life. Is not that the case, Fitz-Henry?" he asked of the lawyer, who, with Ravenshurst, that moment entered the room.

"Who are unfitted for this life?" asked Fitz-Henry.

"Stansville and Talbot—the younger son I mean, who will come into his mother's property, the elder brother is in Parliament—dolts as well as cowards."

"They are wasting their time and opportunities most unwisely, but just now that is rather a prevalent spectacle. Pity something could not be done to raise the younger men, especially those of good family, out of their listlessness."

"The greatest pity. All real energy and activity seem to be knocked out of them. They are totally unlike their *confrères* of half a century back, who, if they now and again indulged in excess and dissipation, yet atoned in great measure for their follies by the zeal with which they threw themselves into politics. Now they dawdle out their existence in inanity, pure and

simple, save when one of them, like Brayclift, goes to the bad, and then he does it openly and unblushingly."

"The man who acts like Brayclift in the present day," said FitzHenry, "is a perfect idiot. There was some excuse for such conduct at the time you have just mentioned, at the beginning of this century, but there is none now. There was then little scope for the outburst of exuberant spirits. If a man did not take to politics, there was nought before him but enforced idleness. But all has changed. The exigencies of our life give room for all to make themselves useful. And were it otherwise, Australia, the Cape, New Zealand are as near as America was under George III."

"I can't understand it," said the Marquis. "The younger sons and the offshoots of good families have every opportunity offered them of acquiring reputation, and yet they calmly relinquish their chances and allow others of lower social rank to pull to the fore. The drawing-room and the club-house bound their existence. Not one in twenty has a tithe of Avondale's zeal and determination."

"Pardon my interrupting you," said Ravenshurst. "I agree with most of your observations, but I really object to your holding up Avondale as a model. You see his good points—I, perhaps, only his bad ones. He seems to be a great deal too self-satisfied and too consequential."

"I fear you scan him rather too narrowly."

"I hope not. And are you not admitting him to too great freedom? He is, if not a mere nobody, yet a man of broken fortune, and common sense would say he is most likely intriguing for his own ends."

"You don't do him justice, Lord Ravenshurst. He is not of broken fortune," objected the Marchioness.

"Decidedly not," said her husband. "He has been asked to put up for his own county at the next election, and Whatcombe, the Lord Lieutenant, has promised to support him."

"Is that really the case?" doubted Ravenshurst.

"Of course it is," replied the Marquis. "You would scarcely question Avondale's word."

"And he is not intriguing for his own ends," added the Marchioness. "Some one has been

telling you much that is false, for I am sure you could not have thought such an idea yourself. I should not be surprised if it were Killarney; I hate Killarney."

"Fortunate Killarney!" ejaculated FitzHenry. "He has got rid of Kate Vandeleur, and is going to marry a girl whom he has not known six months, and who before was half engaged to Mr. Avondale."

"A mistake on Avondale's part."

"You are really predisposed against him, Ravenshurst," said the Marquis. "Here is one, at least, who is his sworn ally," as his son Henry opened the door.

"Oh, mamma!" he shouted, "I have jumped the wharf and Mr. Avondale has jumped the Dead Man's Gully. Oh, so grand! And no one else would follow."

"What is that you're saying, Master Henry?" asked his father.

"Mr. Avondale has leaped the Dead Man's Gully. Mr. Avondale and Mr. Hubert Digby and Lord Brayclift were riding along one side and Jessie Frescheville the other, and the others were some distance behind. Jessie's hat blew

off, and she asked them to come across and fetch it for her. Mr. Avondale said, 'You lead, Digby —you always like to go ahead—and we will follow;' but Digby wouldn't. So Mr. Avondale said, 'Come on, Brayclift—you will, of course, go to aid a lady;' and he touched the horse with the spur, held his head well up, and leaped over. The others had galloped up, and several of the ladies screamed; but he was all right, and he got Jessie's hat, and she gave him the rose she was wearing—yes, she did, mamma—but none of the others would follow. Oh! it was so fine to see him in the air; and such a wide place."

"'Tis wide, by Jove!" said Wharfedale. "What do you think of that, Ravenshurst. Would you care to attempt such a feat? It is twenty clear feet, and you must rise well back and land on firm land, or you would assuredly roll into the gully. What horse was he riding, Henry?"

"The roan, papa, that always stays in the stable by the pigeon's house—'Sir Henri' you call it, papa."

"Sir Henri!" exclaimed Lady Wharfedale, with a little scream.

"That's improving matters," said the Marquis. "There is not a groom in my establishment will venture to mount that beast since he pitched Cook over his head. We call him Sir Henri because he is untameable. Come, Ravenshurst, confess that our young friend who rides so well is more of a gentleman than you have given him credit for."

"Ravenshurst will acknowledge it before the close of next year," said FitzHenry, "unless I am much mistaken. I myself most willingly avow that I have the very highest opinion of Mr. Avondale."

"So have I," said the Marquis. "I suppose we must end our debate by preparing for dinner."

CHAPTER IV.

The Honble. Hubert Digby, mentioned above, was a brother of Lord Woburn, also now staying at the Towers. He was one of those strange phenomena, an aristocratic Radical. He was about thirty, and had been for the last half-a-dozen years anxiously seeking a seat in Parliament, but as yet without success. His views had gradually developed into their present maturity. He was great on educational topics, and considered that the Universities should be thrown open without restraint of any kind; and to convince all the world of the soundness of his convictions, he had recently resigned a fellowship at Oxford, though some asserted that as his approaching marriage with a sister-in-law of Mordaunt Tracey, the younger daughter of Mr. Strickland, would necessitate this step, he had chosen, while time remained, to make capital out of it. He and Avondale were not on good terms; he was jealous

of Avondale for the influence which the latter manifestly possessed amongst the Wharfedale set, and Avondale returned the jealousy with contempt for his pretensions.

Lady Jessie Frescheville was the eldest daughter of Earl Frescheville. The Earl was a Whig of the real type—grand, haughty, slightly pompous, not altogether without brains. He was visiting—if the progresses of such an elevated being may be so spoken of—the Wharfedales. He had large possessions, and, as these lay very aptly around many small boroughs, his political influence was more than proportionate to his wealth. Consequently, the Marquis was very desirous to secure his support, but the necessary labour of listening to his dullness, and of persuading him that his prolixity was the essence of wisdom, was even more than Avondale had arranged for, and he sought a more agreeable, though more dangerous, mode of accomplishing his project, by paying unremitting attention to the Lady Jessie. She was the best of the five who formed the family. She had little of her mother's hauteur, and none of her father's pomposity; was witty, vivacious, fairly accomplished,

and received, as a matter of course, the homage paid her by many of the visitors. Digby was quite as attentive as Avondale. He was great on heroism, and noble deeds. That morning he had been complaining of the decline of chivalry—

"It has died out, and left no principle to supply its place. Its decay has been the sundering of a bond that knit together rich and poor. Don't you think so?"

"Yes—it is very like it. All the young men of the present day are so very selfish. They look after themselves only, and leave us poor women to our own resources. Why, if I were to tumble into the lake,"—they were walking round it—"not one of you would jump in after me."

There were vehement asseverations to the contrary.

"What does Mr. Avondale say?" she asked. "His candour will compel him to give his exact sentiments."

"I? I can, unfortunately, swim, so I presume I should follow the other knights-errant. Otherwise, I should certainly get a long pole, or something of the kind, and extend it to you."

A chorous of disapprobation arose—"What shall be done to him?"

But Lady Campion objected—"You know it's the exact truth, Jessie. Not one of these loud voiced gallants would fish out either of us, if he risked his own precious existence in the doing of it."

"Thanks, Lady Campion," said Avondale. "May you never fall in, and put any one's heroism to the test. But has chivalry died out? Are there no knights-errant now, who go wandering over the world to find out demons and giants, and enchanted lands? Sturt and Wills in Australia, Livingstone, Speke, and Grant, in Africa—what are they? Even the brute chivalry that is tested by merely the power to face death exists as of yore—Massey, fresh from school, climbing the walls of the Redan; the six hundred riding gaily to destruction, in obedience to orders, though some one had blundered; Wilkinson stopping at Delhi, to fire the powder magazine, Stuart winning the spurs of gold that Du Guesclin would have been proud to wear; Stonewall Jackson and Henry Havelock each marching, the one with barefoot troops, the other under a torrid

sun, 350 miles in a single fortnight, and fighting three battles the while; Parkin Jeffcock remaining in the Oaks Colliery, even while the grip of death was on his throat, in order that others might escape—will you match these in past ages?"

"Well said Avondale," exclaimed Wharton, "bless me, if you don't very often hit the truth."

"And," continued Avondale, "Mr. Digby is really too modest when he asserts that chivalry has vanished. He not only gets married—a very chivalrous proceeding, as the ladies will admit—but he actually gives up his fellowship previously, a still more chivalrous action, considering the worship now paid to mammon."

There was a slight titter, and Digby experienced the pleasant sensation a man always experiences when he is in doubt whether to punch his adversary's head, or shake his hand. However, Lady Jessie, in order to keep him in good humour, took his side, and, after lunch, she selected him as her cavalier. The whole party, eight to ten, went down the vale. Lady Jessie crossed the stream, on pretence of seeing something, but told the others not to follow, as she would recross

directly. As she came opposite the gully, her hat, rather unaccountably, fell off, and Avondale, as mentioned, recaptured it for her. She thenceforward snubbed Digby, and she accepted Avondale's arm to the dining-room.

"What a silly man you are," she said, "to risk your life for a woman's whim?"

"I hope I shall never be guilty of a greater piece of folly. Who risks nothing wins nothing?"

"What have you won to-day, sir?"

"A little flower," pointing to the rose.

"You are not really wearing that now. I gave it you merely—"

"Merely to plague Digby—poor fellow! But it is scarcely complimentary to me either."

"I did not mean that. You are wretchedly perverse. Were you so devoid of comprehension when you were canvassing at Waterbridge?"

"Canvassing at Waterbridge, Lady Jessie! You surely do not trouble anything about elections."

"But I do though, a great deal. And I know Lady Thanet—she is very indignant because your side did not give her husband fair play; but he

is to have a peerage as soon as the bother is over —it comes on again soon, when is it?"

"A peerage—this is news," thought Avondale; then aloud—"The enquiry has begun this week. If you are so interested in parliamentary matters, I am surprised the Earl does not take some position in the Government. The present Ministry would be very glad to secure his support, I imagine."

"I dare say they would; I believe Mr. Maitland has spoken to papa, or at least the Duke of Bayswater has for him—you know the Duke is Minister for Foreign Affairs. But papa does not care about politics; he says it is too much bother."

"Ah, I should imagine the Earl would be disgusted with the incessant labour that a seat in the Cabinet involves. But he might take one of the less onerous, and more dignified posts, about the household."

"He might do so, but those are all filled up, and, I dare say, the Government would not venture to quarrel with one of their own party, even to make certain of papa's support."

"Perhaps not. But they might raise him to a higher dignity?"

"He would not refuse that; and, I believe, Bayswater hinted something of the kind."

"Thank you," thought Avondale, and thereupon having acquired all the information he was likely to learn, he turned the conversation—

"Rather a rush of visitors next week," he said.

"Yes," replied his companion, "and such grand people we inferior stars shall be completely overlooked. The Duke of Strathclyde—he is such a nice man, have you seen him yet? Prince Carvada—I don't like him at all. Perhaps the Duke of Hants, Lady Wharfedale's father, but he is old, and not in good health. But her nephew, the Marquis of Stonehenge—you know her only brother is dead—will certainly come. He is so lively and manly, about seventeen, and has only just left Eton."

"We shall be quite overwhelmed, that is such individuals as myself—and Digby too, spite of his chivalry—but you, Lady Jessie, will be the dazzling light round which many unfortunate moths will flutter, and,"—as they rose for the ladies to withdraw—"get their wings burnt, too."

A slight bend in acknowledgment, and a smile, and she was gone.

"Mr. Avondale," said the Marchioness, when she had an opportunity of speaking to him in the drawing-room—"You must not fall in love with Lady Jessie. Young men should never fall in love—it either ruins their prospects, or it prevents them attending properly to their legitimate occupations. And you must not, like some hero of romance, ride fiery horses, and vault tremendous chasms. And you must not quarrel with Mr. Digby. I heard you were so smart—is not that the term?—towards him this morning as to be really rude; yet he will be in Parliament first. And you must conciliate Lord Ravenshurst—he is inclined to think you an intriguant. And you must look after Reginald well—his mother will be so grateful; you have already made a favourable impression on her. And now go over and talk to Lady Frescheville."

CHAPTER V.

Avondale crossed the room. Digby was paying assiduous court to Lady Frescheville ; so he seated himself by Lady Campion.

"Truant," she said, "where have you been ? I am like Una—

'Forsaken, woeful, solitary maid.'

You have been here now nearly a fortnight, and have scarcely deigned to speak to me."

"My dear Lady Campion, how can you say so ? When not engaged with the Marquis I have been your most devoted servant. But you have snubbed my assiduity several times, and selected that fellow Digby as your cavalier instead."

"But then you know he is going to be married, and consequently is the most discreet attendant one could have. Ladies always prefer engaged men ; there is an indefinable—what shall I call

it—charm about them, which makes their company so very attractive."

"An indefinable charm about engaged men! Dear me—I should have thought them an anomalous species of animal, something like the bat that flitters between earth and air, or the chrysalis that is neither a useful silkworm, like myself, for example—"

"Impudent!"

"Nor a gaudy butterfly that hovers the day-long in the full sunshine, the admired of all observers, and sips the honey from every flower, like *cari sposi* generally, and Sir Vivian Langbois, in particular, who has as yet only three divorce cases on hand for the next term."

"It is only two, sir."

"I beg your pardon. It would have been three, but he called on Wallace, and threatened to horsewhip him if he, the husband, any more slandered her, the wife's, character; and the wife added thereto—the *chère* Isabella, she is a nice darling—unimaginable tortures of her own private devising. So the husband backed out of the case, and in order to give the lie direct to all reports, he has allowed Isabella and Sir Vivian to

go together to Homburg and Wiesbaden, and on to Venice, where the Marquis met them, while he himself, charming man, has penitently followed after three days' interval."

"Mr. Avondale, you are a frightful scandal-monger; you are exaggerating everything terribly."

"Not a bit of it; therefore I don't think I shall marry directly. But I will get engaged if you think it—what was it you called it?—so inimitably charming."

"I would—it would add to your numerous exploits."

"But I know no one; will you point but some one who will have pity on my forlorn condition?"

"Jessie Frescheville."

"Jessie Frescheville? why the thought would be the death of the Earl. But even she will not refuse my escort so pointedly as you did yesterday, when you coolly asked Digby to assist you into the saddle, though I had already volunteered my aid."

"I should scarcely think she would, after your exploit of this morning—such a feat would have

stormed any lady's heart; and you have her rose now, preserve it carefully."

"I ought to do so—it's the only flower I have had given me for so long—you are wearing quite a bouquet, yet I dare say you won't spare me even one."

"I would if you asked properly, the whole bouquet, and weave them into a crown for you. Here's Wyversley coming to eject you. It was fortunate you were riding Sir Henri this morning—was it not, Reginald?"

"What—about that leap? Yes, by Jove it was grand, but slightly foolhardy, if I may say so, Walter."

"A narrow escape of breaking your neck, Mr. Avondale," added Lady Campion.

"Not much narrower than I had yesterday. I was so annoyed at seeing Digby trot off so conceitedly with you that, when we came to Barden Gorge, where Digby was a few yards ahead, and there was room for only a single file, I was greatly tempted to let Sir Henri take the bit in his mouth and bolt. He would have smashed up Digby in fine style."

"And yourself, too," said Lady Campion. "I

thought you were free from such aberrations of feeling, and that your giant intellect did not permit you to be harassed by the petty annoyances that disturb the serenity of other people's lives."

Avondale stood up. "How ought I, Wyversley, suitably to acknowledge such a tribute—or such an insinuation?"

"Yes, you ought to be off," said Lady Campion. "You have been talking to me too long. Yesterday I took Mr. Digby, in order to compel you to attend to Lady Frescheville, and now you certainly must not neglect her or the Earl, if you intend to involve him in your political net."

"I have come to tell him the same, Lady Campion; if you can dispense with his company, that is," said Wyversley. "You needn't look so glum, Walter. The Marchioness has sent me with the message. I have been listening to the Earl's harangue for some time, so that I have taken my share of the disagreeable part of the work, and FitzHenry is with him now, looking awfully bored; you certainly must relieve guard."

CHAPTER VI.

Avondale walked off with a somewhat rueful countenance.

"FitzHenry, if his lordship could excuse you," he said, "Lady Campion would be glad of your assistance to make up a rubber."

"I fear Lady Campion must remain without my aid," replied the lawyer. "I am in the midst of an interesting argument with the Earl—"

"Don't mention it, sir," interposed the Earl very graciously; "when a lady calls, all other engagements give way."

"Perhaps I can supply Mr. FitzHenry's place," said Walter, "as a listener, I mean; not as a disputant. I have no argumentative skill, and if I had, your lordship's unequalled reasoning powers and acumen would overwhelm me."

He took the seat FitzHenry had gladly vacated. The Earl smiled with extreme condescension

"Your modesty compels you to take too low an estimate of your abilities, Mr. Avondale. I have heard much of you, and I seldom hear of any but persons of mark, and if I do I never remember their names."

"Your lordship is far too flattering to myself. I am not surprised that you should forget the names of many who come under your notice. In the present state of society so many causes concur to give an undue prominence to a multitude of little men who but a century ago would not have been known out of their own restricted circle."

"Just what I have been saying to Mr. Fitz-Henry, but he does not altogether agree with me. I am highly pleased that your views are so nearly in accord with mine."

"Now a meeting of Railway Shareholders, or of some Joint Stock Company on the verge of bankruptcy is placarded far and wide; while the petty squabbles of every miserable vestry, and the jangling and personal abuse of the half-a-dozen pursy councilmen of any tenth-rate borough attract almost as much interest as the Sessions of Parliament."

"Just what I have been saying."

"This is not as it ought to be. Mayors and Corporations are doubtless all very good in their way. Aldermen and town beadles are, of course, very estimable men, very estimable and perfect as far as Providence intended them, for though there may be many varieties of human nature, distinct and separate from each other by unmistakable signs, yet, as we learn that everything is good, we may fairly assume that each variety has its full measure of perfection."

"Precisely so, Mr. Avondale, you are a genius. That is what I wished to make FitzHenry understand: but either my talent for exposition is very poor or his faculty of comprehension is not highly developed."

"The latter, probably, my lord; or rather his great abilities—"

"They are great, Mr. Avondale."

"—may, perhaps, be somewhat warped by his profession. A barrister is so accustomed to maintaining one side of a question that even in common matters he is seldom able to consider the topic dispassionately, and to give due weight to his opponent's arguments."

"That must be it, Mr. Avondale. I was astonished at FitzHenry's obtuseness; yet I was certain my views were correct. They are a part of my nature, my mental nature, and must, I believe, have been born with me, for I cannot remember the time when I had them not. From earliest childhood I have felt that there was a radical difference between the various classes of the body politic. The physical conformation of all men may be the same, though this is very questionable, anatomists and doctors are far from being agreed on this point, and to my mind, at least, there is a vast distinction between a thick-lipped negro, a tawny Mongolian, and a white skinned European; but this apart, and taking the same race—our own, for instance—are a nobleman, and a farm labourer, a Minister of State and a chimney-sweep, filled with the same aims and aspirations? Of course their actual occupations are totally diverse, but would that alone make their inmost longings to be equally diverse, if there were not some other all-powerful, ever-present influence that directs into dissimilar grooves the nerve-currents—that is the new term—of each? There must be some predisposing

cause, a cause internal not external, a cause which is an essential portion of us, for nothing less could modify the being, the actual being, the soul and spirit of humanity."

"Yet, my lord, it is these lower insignificant atoms of society which would direct the whole—the people whose thoughts do not extend beyond the morrow, whose aspirations are limited to the getting an existence from day to day, whose keenest pleasures are the gross satisfaction of mere bodily cravings—it is these, these, my lord, who would hamper and control the views of the mighty geniuses whose ken has pierced adown the course of time to its farthest limits, and caught a glimpse faint, though distant, of the wonders that are in store for posterity."

"You speak eloquently, Mr. Avondale. But you must not forget that whatever we may think of such presumption, not a few of those who style themselves statesmen favour—with a view to their own especial glorification, I grant—the spread and growth of such doctrines."

"Your lordship would not be one of such favourers?"

"I? God forbid. I have avoided politics,

because, as a private individual, my concerns are even more than I can properly discharge, and had I paid any attention to State affairs, I must, of course, have been a prominent leader."

"But, even your privacy is much more public than many men's publicity. Your position places you, willingly or unwillingly, in the full glare of the light that radiates from the throne and makes your passive support to be eagerly sought after by Liberal and Tory alike."

"Of course, Mr. Avondale. That is an inevitable result of greatness. A person in my position cannot altogether withdraw himself from the affairs of the nation of which he is so important a fragment."

"I have heard"—this was a random shot of our hero's—"that the Earl of Garmouth was extremely anxious to secure your lordship's countenance, that he, in fact, desired you to select any post in the household which you should deem most suited to your worth."

"Did you really hear so?" said the Earl rather vivaciously. "You must possess wonderful sources of information; it was to be a perfect secret, because the Duke of Damnonia was

jealous of my influence, and had demanded the office himself. It was the post of Seneschal at Windsor Castle, but you know the authority of that officer extends over all the Royal armouries, and over the household troops wherever stationed. On this latter head there have been several quarrels between the Seneschal and the Commander-in-Chief as to their relative jurisdiction, and, therefore, when I declined the appointment it was conferred on the latter, and the same session an Act was passed directing that in future the same officer should fill both."

"So I remember. I was not aware of the immediate origin of that Act, as my information did not state the exact post offered to your lordship. I suppose Mr. Maitland has renewed the attempt made by Garmouth?"

"Yes; he and the Duke of Bayswater have been worrying me unceasingly."

"I am surprised at the Duke remaining a member of Maitland's Cabinet. Maitland's views are so thoroughly those whose tendency you have been so justly deploring."

"They are, Mr. Avondale; at least, I fear so."

"They can scarcely be otherwise, seeing that

he himself springs from the classes whose pretensions he embodies. It will be a sad misfortune for this country if it is to be abandoned to his guidance for any lengthened period."

"It will be, Mr. Avondale. Yet Maitland is gifted with powers of persuasion, and two or three of my brother peers are yielding almost implicitly to him."

"But could not something be done to put an end to the present state of affairs? Maitland's personal following in the Lower House cannot be large. He is Premier simply and solely because no one else lays claim to that station; because those opposed to him are mistrustful of each other. Were some one of moderate views to put himself forward, he would most certainly obtain the support of those Liberals who are of your lordship's style of thinking, and of those Tories who do not stubbornly resist any change and innovation."

"That may be, but who would be an eligible leader for such a purpose?"

"I scarcely know. Your lordship, of course, would not burden yourself with such a task, but perhaps you would not hesitate to support a

well-qualified nobleman who possessed the necessary tact and discretion and standing in society."

"I do not think I should refuse him my aid—indeed, I might be inclined to render him active help, that is as far as my many occupations permitted me the leisure. I consider that the Premier ought to be a Peer. But whom would you suggest? Damnonia I could not serve with; Bayswater is too closely leagued with the present Ministry to turn round upon it; the Earl of Cotteswold is a promising young man, but too much connected with the Tories; the Duke of Lincoln is in many respects well suited, but is, perhaps, too young, and has not had experience enough."

"Our host—the Marquis of Wharfedale."

"Ah, I forgot him altogether. But what are his ideas on the subject?" added the Earl, half suspiciously.

"At first sight," said Avondale, avoiding a direct answer, "one would say he is like yourself, weary of politics. He has so recently resigned office."

"So he has—I forgot that too. You are a capital remembrancer, Mr. Avondale. Let's give

him a hint on the matter. Where is he? Oh, talking to the Countess."

He caught Wharfedale's eye, gave a slight nod, and the Marquis walked across to him.

"Frescheville," he said, "I fear Mr. Avondale has been boring you. The ladies are most anxious you should join them."

"Not in the least—he is a most delightful companion—quite a diplomatist. And what do you think? He has been hinting that you and I should put ourselves at the head of a party sworn to upset the present Cabinet."

"What! Mr. Avondale a politician! I thought he was merely a ladies' man—a drawing-room cavalier."

"He is not, though—he has very deep views on matters of State and politics."

"I am glad you say so. But business to-morrow. The ladies have been complaining this half hour of your want of gallantry in so entirely neglecting them."

CHAPTER VII.

Lady Lucy de Breaute arrived that afternoon, in company with Sir Marmaduke and Lady Acton. "You must be most attentive to her," whispered the Marchioness to Avondale, in the drawing-room before dinner. "She has great influence with the Duke—you know she is his only child by his first wife. And besides, I may tell you a secret—Lord Exmoor is unmarried; his father does not wish him to remain unmarried any longer."

Nevertheless, Avondale after dinner betook himself in preference to Lady Jessie, for he was desirous to learn what had been the tenour of Digby's conversation in the morning, that gentleman even now devoting himself unremittingly to the Earl and Countess.

But the Lady Jessie was very distant, and supremely nonchalant. The walk had been delightful and the weather fine—she knew nothing

about politics—the vale of the Wharfe was, doubtless, very beautiful—yes, Mr. FitzHenry was a splendid speaker—she did not care about Ritualists—and, and, and, then there came a prolonged yawn.

Now, a yawn at the best of times is most unkind. Even if you have been pestered till past endurance with a bore, it is too harsh to yawn at him; you may, if you choose, ring the bell for the servant to show him the door, and indeed, in case of absolute necessity, you may proceed to kick him out; but one should never yawn—it tells your neighbour so very plainly that you are tired of him, his conversation, his presence, and that you not only consider him a humbug, and may be a knave, but also an inane, empty headed one. But a thousand times more unkind is it for a lady to yawn at an admirer, who is striving to win her good will—it is the refinement of cruelty, the quintessence of scorn.

Avondale was greatly annoyed at the lady's indifference, real or assumed, and Digby coming with a most satisfied air directly after to address her, he yielded her to that admirer, vowing to make the said admirer atone for the slight.

He rose, and crossing the room, met Wyversley "Something wrong, Walter?" inquired the latter. "Digby ejected you from Jessie Frescheville's good books? I thought it very likely this afternoon when we—Digby, Frescheville, myself, with the ladies—wandered to the Priory. Digby stuck to the Earl, and it struck me he was trying to undo your work in that quarter. Cannot one of us punch his head, or do something of the kind? But for the moment this is impossible, so, perhaps, you had better go and have a chat with Lady de Breaute. I heard the Marchioness tell you to attend to her."

Avondale obeyed the speaker, and took a seat by the lady's side. She had not yet spoken to him, so she condescended so far as to express her pleasure at meeting him again. "You have been to Scotland, Wyversley tells me—how did you like it?"

"Very much indeed. I have always liked it, but this time I saw scarcely anything of the country—only Loch Lomond and Stirling, and the intervening parts."

"You know Edinburgh?"

"Yes, though I fear I cannot be so enraptured

over it as most Scotch people expect their visitors to be."

"But you surely cannot deny that it is a very fine city, the finest, indeed, in Great Britain—what other have we like it?"

"If you really ask my private opinion, and will excuse my giving it, I must say that Bath is in every way worthy of a comparison with Edinburgh. From the high hill running down into Bath on the south—Holloway and Odd Down it is called—you get as fair a view as you do from Arthur's Seat, or the Calton."

"Are you acquainted with Bath? I know it well—it is a beautiful city—but do you consider it is quite as lovely as Edinburgh?"

"Every bit, Lady de Breaute. Standing on the hill I have mentioned, you have before you the whole of the Queen of the West—you can see all the streets, the Royal Crescent, the Parks, the Abbey, the Guildhall—Lansdowne forms a grand and unapproachable back ground—and to the east are the romantic dells of Combhay and Limpley Stoke."

"Bath is very beautiful, but I still prefer Edinburgh."

"And the Cannon Gate to Milsom Street?"

"Oh, Mr. Avondale, you are quite ungallant to attempt to drive me into a corner. You ought to know, sir, a lady may have any opinion she likes, and the more absurd it is so the more pertinaciously she will keep to it."

"There's an avowal for you, Walter," said Wyversley, laughing. "You had better make a note of it."

"And a charge against me, too—how am I to purge myself of it?"

"By bringing that portfolio," she replied. "I like to see prints and paintings of every kind." "Thank you," as Avondale fetched the portfolio, which he opened, and he and Wyversley held between them, while the Marquis' son, Henri, looked on. "Chromos," she exclaimed. "They are so nice. These seem, most of them, to have come from the Alps and the Italian lakes."

"So I should think," said Wyversley. "That seems to me very like Como from the Villa d'Este, and that is Lecco."

"Yes," said Henri. "Mamma brought them home this summer. But there are also some

views of Wharfedale mixed with them. There is St. Simon's Seat."

The Lady Jessie had not intended to drive Avondale away altogether. She merely meant to instil into him a proper idea of her own dignity, and of his insignificance, and to give him to understand that he must not presume on the few words which she had deigned to exchange with him. Digby had discreetly hinted to her the reports that were already mentioned in some quarters as to Avondale's ambitious schemes; she had not only broken the same to her father, but had also added thereto much of his own surmises and beliefs. The Earl was quite aghast at the nearness of the precipice which he had been approaching; and he unhesitatingly, and, perhaps, unthinkingly, made his informant acquainted with the whole of Avondale's conversation.

"This young man must be an accomplished schemer. Why, I thought that he was simply putting before me the state of political parties, instead of which he was coolly winding his net about me. Of course his plotting would not have succeeded—I should have discovered his aims before long—but he must be a skilful

dissembler to have over-reached, in the smallest degree, a man of my sagacity. But who are with him? Had we not better inform Wharfedale, or he may, perhaps, be involved before he perceives Mr. Avondale's projects?"

Digby half smiled, he considered the Earl an even greater simpleton than he had before suspected him to be.

"What persons are in league with him? I imagine Mr. Maitland's position is not very secure, and perhaps my influence might suffice to turn the scale against him—that is supposing there is really a strong party forming against him."

"Your lordship's support would, doubtless, be most important to the Government, but I understood you had partially promised it."

"No, not promised it. I should be glad to support any Cabinet that deserved well of the country, but I cannot say I have any predilection for Mr. Maitland, or for one or two of his colleagues."

"I fear, my lord, you are prejudiced against the Premier. My brother, Woburn, and my future brother-in-law, Mordaunt Tracy, the Under

Secretary for Foreign Affairs, both think the same, and they have desired me to attempt to persuade you to take a better opinion of him. The Duke of Bayswater, who is so very anxious to get you over to their side, said that you had even declared you would not accept a dukedom from the hands of Maitland, and he was extremely grieved by your refusal."

"But I did not refuse," said Frescheville, very hastily. "Bayswater made no offer. He merely hinted this, that, and the other, and so I somewhat unceremoniously cut him short."

"A mutual misunderstanding—perhaps I had better drop Tracy a line to that effect—he is, you know, Bayswater's sub."

"Oh, no, not on any account. Maitland might think that I was anxious to get a step in the peerage, or that I would allow my decision on matters affecting the nation's eternal welfare to be swayed by the dazzle of titles and rank."

"You may make yourself easy," replied Digby. "No one who knows your lordship's character would have, for an instant, a doubt on that point." (Which was, indeed, the exact truth.)

"I trust you will excuse me for cautioning you against Mr. Avondale."

"I am excessively obliged; but who are those who are united with him in this insane idea, that is, supposing your surmise is correct."

"I cannot say—perhaps we are premature in supposing any plot in existence. The facts are these. Avondale is very intimate with Jardine and with FitzHenry. Jardine made that speech in May last which led to the resignation of the Earl of Garmouth. About the same time Avondale was introduced to our host, who, by a strange coincidence, resigned immediately, as did also Sir Henry Kerr, a friend of Jardine's. Then Avondale contested Waterbridge, running Percy Mulgrave very close, and we believe that FitzHenry obtained for him the aid of the best firm of solicitors at Waterbridge. Now we find FitzHenry and Avondale here together; Exmoor is coming in a day or two, and his resignation is anticipated, and some one has been tampering with Herbert Williams. There, my lord, are the facts; to which we can now add Avondale's very noticeable conversation with yourself."

The Earl's importance was wonderfully increased by the idea that he had been made the centre round which political intrigues were whirling. He thanked Digby—who, by the by, had gone beyond his instructions in mentioning a dukedom, but the urgency was pressing—and assured him the Ministry might rely on his aid, "so long, of course, as their deliberations were directed to proper ends," "of which proper ends" the meaning could easily be interpreted. He then, in accents, impressive from their very solemnity, divulged to his daughter, his usual counsellor and guide, the intricate conspiracy which his penetration had detected.

The Lady Jessie was perhaps not so horrified as she ought to have been, but her vanity was somewhat ruffled at the thought that the pretty words and gallant speeches of Avondale had probably been dictated by other feelings than those of admiration. She, therefore, determined to punish him, and she succeeded so admirably as entirely to overdo her work. Avondale did not join her the whole evening, and she had the mortification of seeing that even the cold and stately Lady Lucy de Breaute, the "Queen of the

Night," as she was often styled, could smile at his sallies, and listen attentively to his conversation—the mortification, because, though her vanity had been wounded, yet her interest in Avondale was heightened by the discovery of his schemes, and, like himself, she was ambitious and eager for fame—all women are—and would not unwillingly have extended to him counsel and encouragement, and, perhaps, even more.

But the bird did not return to his cage; and next morning the Earl's supercilious nod to Avondale, and his haughty stare, defeated all hopes of reconciliation. FitzHenry noticed the change—

"One of your card houses blown down?"

"Looks very like it, my dear sir. 'An enemy hath been sowing tares;' but it is most fortunate that Frescheville has thus early come out in his real colours. He wants a marquisate; had he waited a week or two longer, and led us on further he might have acquired information which Maitland would have purchased with a dukedom."

"Well, don't look so annoyed. It will do you good to learn there are other plotters as skilful as yourself, and other intellects as far-seeing

as your own. But perhaps you can recover the lost ground."

"I fear not. Digby has been, I dare say, commissioned to conclude the negociation on any terms—if so, it's '*bon jour au* Comte de Frescheville.'"

Any doubts on the matter were resolved that evening. Avondale was leaning over the back of a lounge on which Lady Campion was sitting and whispering some choice piece of scandal into her ear; his face and hers being in somewhat dangerous proximity. Lady Jessie had just concluded a song, and was moving from the piano, when, at the same moment, Lady Campion rather suddenly half turned her head, and her cheek came so close to Avondale's lips as to raise a very reasonable suspicion in the mind of an observer that she felt their touch. It was a most unfortunate *contretemps*. Lady Jessie Frescheville alone noticed it; but she was the person who would put the worst possible construction upon it. A woman never forgives a man for making a fool of her, and, least of all, a young and beautiful woman who deems herself thrown aside for a rival. Lady Jessie Frescheville

jumped to the inevitable conclusion, but she showed not a sign of feeling, save that her glance, even as it rested for the moment on Avondale, changed to one of strong indifference, and she majestically resumed her seat by Lady Wharfedale.

CHAPTER VIII.

Next morning several of the visitors went for a ride down the Vale. As they returned some of the gentlemen put their steeds to one or two of the hedges. Avondale, who was on Sir Henri, cleared them in fine style, while Digby and Wyversley, whose hacks were of much inferior breed, showed to great disadvantage.

"It's the horse, rather than the rider, that's in fault, Wyversley," said Sir Edward Wharton. "Better ask Avondale to let you try Sir Henri."

"No, thanks, I object to that brute on principle. Let Brayclift try him."

"Rather not," said the Marquis; "rather not —beg to decline the honour, as I have some regard for my limbs. Besides, the mare I am on is pretty good at the fences; she has not smashed through them like you and Digby have. I thought Digby was somewhat of an equestrian —either he or his horse has been libelled. If

he is not afraid he had better try Sir Henri at the next leap, if only to recover his credit."

"I should be delighted," exclaimed Digby. "I have been envious of Avondale, who has appropriated that splendid horse."

"Better leave him alone," said Wyversley maliciously; "he would pitch you off. You have a good seat, but I doubt much if you have nerve enough."

Digby, however, was very pressing; so at length Avondale yielded, and changed horses.

"Don't trust to the stirrups at all," he said, as Digby mounted, "but stick your knees well into him; hold the rein tight, but don't worry him with the curb."

Digby got along finely. Meanwhile the ladies had gone on some distance in advance; the gentlemen behind therefore went off at a trot to overtake them. The trot became smarter, next a gallop, finally a race. Sir Henri's blood was up, he grew unmanageable, then bolted. There was a general shout of consternation. Away he sped, his head out, the bit between his teeth, both reins—he had tugged them from Digby's hands—hanging over his neck, and Digby holding

on, fearfully, tightly, grimly, to the pummel. Lady Campion and Sir Marmaduke Alton heard the horse's clatter, and drew aside to let him pass. Frescheville, Sir Hugh Campion, Lady Lucy de Breaute and the Marchioness did the same. On the horse went. A hundred yards ahead, just off the road, was the Dead Man's Gap. Sir Henri had not forgotten it. He turned from the road, and leaped it as if for amusement, and then continued his headlong course on the other side of the Wharfe, and so on home. But Digby was not on him. In utmost terror at the ravine yawning before him, he threw himself from his horse, and there he lay within a dozen feet of the brink, one leg fractured and his head broken, but not dangerously injured. They speedily obtained aid, placed him on a rough litter, and conveyed him to the Towers. The Marquis and FitzHenry, alarmed by the arrival of the horse covered with foam, riderless, came to meet the party, and though they condoled with Digby, they were glad to find him and not Avondale the sufferer.

"It will be well nigh Christmas," said the

lawyer to Avondale, "before he leaves his room. I hope you are satisfied."

"Perfectly."

"It was too bad of you," said Lady Wharfedale; "you are as spiteful as a woman."

Lady Jessie gave him a look, in which were strongly mingled the wish that Avondale had met with the mishap, and regret that she had to be completely separated from him.

CHAPTER IX.

The Duke and Duchess of Strathclyde were received with the utmost respect and ceremony. The Marquis and Lady Wharfedale met them at the entrance to the Hall; and they passed down a double line of retainers that extended from the door to the foot of the grand staircase, whence the steward conducted them to the state apartments. A half-hour later they were ushered with similar pomp into the magnificent drawing-room. The visitors all rose—they numbered more than sixty—and after due sorting they filed off to the Hall. The tables on the daïs were not brought into requisition, because, as there were not enough persons to fill up all, it would have been most invidious and in the worst taste to have made any distinction, and to have assigned some to a position of honour and others to a lower grade. The Marquis and his most distinguished guests took the centre of the three tables.

Avondale found himself near the head of one of the others, with Mrs. Bransdon—she and her husband had also come to the Towers that morning—on one hand and Wyversley next her, and Sir Hugh Campion on the other; the gentlemen considerably exceeding the ladies. It was an imposing festival. The Hall was brightly lit up by lamps hung from the ceiling, and its panels and wainscoting of oak, dark with age, reflected the rays as from polished mirrors. In one of the galleries was a band of musicians, whose strains every now and again reverberated through the vast room. Crowds of servants were in waiting, many of them dressed in the garb of Elizabeth's reign. Looking down on the assembly gleamed portraits of many of the notabilities of the family; and on the daïs and by the side walls were arranged numerous complete suits of armour, some which usually stood there, others brought for the special occasion from the armoury.

"What do you think of it?" asked Mrs. Bransdon of Avondale.

"Grand; is it not?" replied the latter.

"It reminds me of one of the gorgeous

pageants," said Mrs. Bransdon, "in which our forefathers so much delighted—which were held on the wedding of a monarch, for instance."

"Or an Indian durbar," added Avondale, "where the rulers of millions ride hundreds of miles to pay obeisance to an English commoner."

"But that is purely glitter and tinsel—mere barbaric splendour. Here you have the highest refinement of modern life set off by surroundings that remind you of the past. Besides, the people we see here have not come together to pay homage to their entertainer, or humbly to acknowledge themselves the slaves of him or of the power which he represents."

"I suppose not; but, nevertheless, they most of them instinctively recognise the existence of intellectual superiority, and they pay homage to it in fact, if not in word. Look at the whole lot carefully, Mrs. Bransdon. Not a dozen but bear some epithet, which says they are of a different class to the rest of humanity, but there the distinction ends. Two men present, a lawyer and an author, will within a period that may be counted by perhaps months, be the leaders and directors

whom these people and others like them will be contentedly following."

"I am sure," said Mrs. Bransdon laughing, "I feel immensely flattered by the high opinion you have of my husband's ability. I will certainly relate to him your pretty speech. But all your speeches are not so pretty, nor are all your actions so amiable. The Marchioness found me just now to tell me how you entrapped Hubert Digby into mounting some very vicious horse, and that he has narrowly escaped death in consequence."

"Poor Digby, how savage he must be lying in bed with a bandaged leg and a bruised head, and knowing what a grand feast is going on below. But it serves him right—it is solely through his ambition o'erleaping itself—or its saddle, whichever is the proper mode of reading that quotation."

"Take care your ambition does not meet with a similar fall."

"It has had one already—a very severe one. Lord Frescheville has haughtily snubbed me as being a common-place plotter, and has entrusted his political conscience to the guidance of

Digby—has loaned it him, in fact, in trust, as the lawyers say, for the benefit of Maitland, a Marquisate being the price demanded for the service. And the Lady Jessie has filled up my cup of bitterness, by sending me the willow wand, and directing the light of her countenance to this same fortunate gentleman."

"Dear me, what an unlucky being you must be. But you have survived these accumulated hardships, and indeed seem at present to be suffering under no overpowering depression of spirits."

"Could I possibly be so at present, Mrs. Bransdon? But you really ought not to fish for compliments. Even if the craving for them be one of the instincts implanted in woman's nature—"

"That will do, sir. There's no man I know who is not fully as accessible to flattery as the most frivolous woman, and Mr. Walter Avondale is not free from such a weakness—he may, perhaps, give it some more sounding designation, fame, renown, or what not."

"What's that?" asked Wyversley. "Mrs. Bransdon paying you a compliment, I presume,

Walter, from the lively tone in which she spoke."

"Most decidedly, though I could not appreciate it. She says that every man is more conceited than his neighbour, and that Lord Frescheville, yourself, Percy Mulgrave, and your humble servant — she lumped us all together; rather flattering to you and me—are the choicest specimens she can select."

"I trust your lordship will not believe a word he is saying," exclaimed Mrs. Bransdon. "He is not one bit improved since the summer."

"While, on the contrary," continued Avondale, "all women—and who can deny the assertion? —are houris, saints, immortelles, each more lovely, more stainless, more enchanting than the other, and that of all the most enchantingly agreeable is the wife of the Member for Dartsworth."

"Pray, Mr. Avondale, don't be quite so absurd," said Mrs. Bransdon, in a tone as expressive of anger as she could make it.

"Pardon me," replied Avondale, "if I have given offence. But I can scarcely restrain myself; I am so thoroughly enjoying myself at Fresche-

ville's expense. Look at him; was ever dullness and mediocrity better pourtrayed? But it is not that which amuses me. See how enraged he is at the consideration shown the Duke. There was not so much fuss made about himself when he came, and the shock to his pride is most intense. His face is a perfect study. He is trying to assume at the same instant an appearance of hauteur, importance, wisdom, condescension and dignity, and the result is a failure."

"You are too harsh on him; he does not seem well."

"It's mental, not physical, pain he is suffering. The Lady Jessie, too—what do you think, Mrs. Bransdon?—she actually yawned at me yesterday."

"Abominable! heartless! How did you resent such an indignity?"

"Handed her over to the care of Digby. That was punishment ample, though she pretended to think on the contrary. She is, I warrant, much more inclined to yawn now, with Ryston as her attendant. A nice promising individual that

for the heir apparent of an earl. But he might, at the least, try to talk to his neighbour instead of so very carefully looking to his plate and the wine glasses."

Soon a flourish of trumpets announced the close of the banquet. Ladies and gentlemen withdrew together to the drawing-room. An impromptu ball followed, and it was morn ere the company separated.

"I have been thinking you were lost," said Lady Campion, "till I saw you a few minutes since earnestly conversing with Exmoor."

"Lost, my dear Lady Campion, from such an assembly as this! The remembrance of it will live in my breast for many a day."

"Pooh, pooh! Ambition will put other thoughts into your head, and you will soon forget the friends who saw you taking the first steps upon the road to the Temple of Fame."

"Forget, Lady Campion! You don't mean what you are saying. Whose flower was this? It was given me two days since, yet it is still fresh and vigorous. If I forget not trifles, can I forget the thoughts and hopes that send the

blood coursing, with a quickening circulation, through the heart?"

"I dare say. 'Men are deceivers ever.' What was the Marchioness saying to you?—something very interesting, of course."

"Very interesting. She warned me not to fall in love. No, I am wrong—it was about Digby. She rowed me finely. But she has really once cautioned me against the sportive god; yet you give me the directly contrary advice. Which am I to follow?"

"I cannot say. I would I might. But you probably would not attend to me."

"I should most certainly."

"So you say. Why, then, do you not tender a discreet apology to Jessie Frescheville? She would not refuse it; she seems completely bored. And no man should hesitate to atone for his offence if he has given a lady cause for complaint."

"But I have given her no cause. I have asked her for one of the dances, but she was engaged. She was not engaged, however, Wyversley says, till Ryston asked her afterwards; and I am delighted to say that my lord Ryston contrived to

entangle his foot in the dress she is wearing, and to damage it most disastrously. The Earl, too—have you noticed him?—has been stalking about with a countenance as expressive of pleasure as if he were the Demon of Melancholy. Their visit is not over for the next ten days or fortnight, but I should not be surprised if it came to a sudden end to-morrow."

Avondale's suspicion proved correct. The Earl, after perusing his letters next morning, pleaded unexpected urgent business, and left by mid-day, tendering profuse apologies for the suddenness of his departure.

CHAPTER X.

Avondale, without much grief, saw Frescheville, safely off. It was only in deference to the express wish of the Marquis that he had paid court to the pompous dignitary; but the task had been most disagreeable, and he was greatly relieved now that it had definitely come to a conclusion. He, too, had many letters by that day's post. One from Stuart Jardine:—

"How are you getting on with the bribery and corruption business? I presume you give it some different designation when 'bloated aristocrats and turnip-headed squires' (*vide* speech of James Muddler, Esq., at Grantham, on Saturday last), instead of greengrocers and tallow chandlers, are the beings whose sentiments are to be made chime in with our own; but of course experience acquired at Waterbridge will stand you good service in your present avocation. Abel, the member for the county, one of the subs

in the Finance Office, has been persistently pumping the Governor, ever since we returned, to know what you are up to, but I fancy he not only got nothing for his pains, but threw away needlessly the scraps of information which he had favoured the Governor with as an inducement to lead him on to a similar confidence. There has been a shindy between Sloe, Blocke Head, and Sir Edward Pilgrim; about what I can't say, but it was as much as the Duke of Bayswater could do to patch up a reconciliation. Pilgrim was going to resign, so I suppose it was something about the Church. You have Lord Frescheville with you—don't waste any blandishments on him; Bayswater has already bought him. But he is such a mass of self-conceit that he would be dear at any price. By the by, Abel has suggested that Sir Charles McLeod Jardine, Bart., of Glenullyn, would sound well, especially if the said Jardine were substituted in place of Kelley as Chief Commissioner of Customs. Governor objected strongly to a partnership; and then it was further suggested that perhaps Rowe would make a better Minister of Education than Herbert Williams, whose

tenure of office is considered to be very uncertain. Rather accommodating, was it not?

"I trust you find life at Egremond Towers somewhat more exciting than it is here. I am already getting weary of the country, and dread the next two months. We have killed off all the grouse, save a few birds that have banded together for mutual protection and put out sentinels to give warning of the approach of invaders. I am going over to Kerr's, at Ballock next week, and the latter part of November I have promised to spend with Stansville in Northumberland—he has some very good pheasant shooting. After that I believe we return to town.

"The governor will be with you next Monday or Tuesday. He is brimful of politics, and judging from the names given in the 'Times,' the Marquis will have enough of both Houses of Parliament at Egremond to form a Ministry, and improvisate debates amongst yourselves."

Messrs. Rosse and Taylor wrote that the Commission had been opened on Monday, and that it would be well for him to be ready for giving evi-

dence, if called upon, before the close of next week.

His sister sent her usual billet of encouragement and affection. She had an item of information upon which she dwelt at great length —Miss Vrynne and her father had returned. Edith was never tired of talking to her brother about Florence Vrynne, and a long letter was now completely filled up with an account of her travels, her appearance, her words, even her wishes. A few minutes Avondale mused over the letter, half-wondering at the interest his sister displayed; but he dismissed the matter with "a girl's friendship," and turned his thoughts to the race he was running.

CHAPTER XI.

Later on in the day he encountered Lady Campion. "Heard the news, Mr. Avondale?" she asked.

"What news? The coachmen did not, I hope, employ 'Sir Henri' to convey Lord Frescheville to Ilkley."

"You hope exactly the contrary, but the Earl and the Countess and the Lady Jessie were safely deposited in the train. It has nothing to do with them. The second post has this minute come in, it brings news—what do you think?"

"Cannot guess—my inventive faculty is very weak."

"A batch of new knights and baronets—guess their names."

"That's easy enough—they are certain to be the biggest duffers in existence. Sammy Simpkins will be one. His wife would not have allowed him to vote so consistently for Maitland if

she had not seen something was to be made out of it."

"Yes, it is Mr. Simpkins."

"Is it really true? You are not poking fun at me? It was only a blind shot of mine."

"It is positively true. Exmoor has received a note from Lord Tintern. There had been some talk about it, but the names had not been definitely settled, and I can see that Exmoor is somewhat more than annoyed at the list sent him."

"Not at all unlikely. Simpkins' wife is the sister of that man Muddler, and the giving a baronetcy—I suppose it is not less—to him is a direct insult to Exmoor. But so much the better."

"Of course it is so much the better—the better, that is, for your purposes. Every occurrence is to be estimated according as it makes for or against your schemes. Politics! politics! nothing else. All day you are planning, plotting, labouring for the one end, at night I suppose your dreams are tinged with the same subject. What a strange young man you are. All other thoughts are banished from your brain."

"Oh, no. Ambition may be my loadstone,

but other thoughts are not banished. I, too, build air castles and tenant them with fairy forms. I see the gates of Fame's grand temple opened wide, but another enters with me to claim the coronet of glory."

"And you will accomplish your undertaking if you are only true to yourself. And then—and then—"

"And then I shall not forget the past, as you have so unkindly asserted I shall. The words you spoke last night have not left me yet. They have prompted two or three verses as an attempt at reply. I can give you the air though not the full setting."

He touched lightly the keys of a piano, and read with a low voice the lines—

FORGOTTEN ?

Forgotten? And do you then venture to ask me
Such a question as that, Lady Clare?
So long in your smiles have I basked me,
Did I wish to withdraw, could I dare?

Forgotten? So tightly your chains are around me,
How can I break them off, Lady Clare?
'Tis you, who in fetters have bound me,
Who alone can my freedom declare.

Forgotten? forgotten? Oh never! oh never!
While remembrance remains, Lady Clare;
Our hearts with our lives death may sever,
But for thee will I breathe my last prayer.

She extended her hand to take the paper. It touched Avondale's, and it was burning hot. He did not dare to look in her face, for he knew he should read there confirmation of what he felt; and he could not speak for words were trembling on his tongue, eager for utterance, which even now his reason told him must not be spoken. A long, still pause, and then Clare Campion tottered to the nearest seat, and Walter Avondale hastily left the room. He was a prey to many conflicting emotions; passion was agitating and rending his soul; he almost sickened with the whirl of thoughts that chased each other tumultuously through his brain; he knew not where or how to calm himself, and would have returned to her he had just quitted, but a warning voice rang in his ear—

"Pray God your affections may be turned towards a proper object. Heaven pity the woman if they are not—and you too. It will be destruction to her, ruin to you, and may be madness to both."

Was it conscience spake? or had he heard those words before? They seemed familiar, and yet he could not remember them. Most strange

is that faculty of the mind whereby it recalls certain facts and occurrences, eliminated from all the associations that had caused their first adherence. Thus they rise up before us, distinct, naked, individual, and we doubt whether they are present creations of the intellect or mere reproductions of what has already been. So Avondale was uncertain whence came, what originated the caution; for though his memory was most powerful as a whole, yet it now and then proved faulty on unimportant points—it could grasp readily and comprehend the outlines of a subject, it was only with difficulty that it could acquire and retain the minutiæ.

CHAPTER XII.

While thus vacillating, longing yet dreading, to turn back, he met FitzHenry. "Good day, Avondale, I have not seen you this morning yet—you are just the man I want. Heard the news yet?"

"That Sammy Simpkins is made a baronet—Yes. Hope Exmoor likes it. Any one else?"

"Lloyd Davies."

"What! the frantic Dissenting parson, who nearly upset Herbert Williams at the last election. Maitland has a knack of rubbing the sore points of his colleagues."

"Don't forget Davies is nephew or something of the kind to Sloe. Wooden Leatherhead next."

"Who represents the seven wise men of Gothane—good."

"Stanhope Broome."

"Who defeated Bransdon at Marshfield and then sold out in favour of Blocke Head—good, very good."

"We want you to improve the occasion. Exmoor is in the bay parlour with Lady Wharfedale and one or two others—go in and contrive to work upon his annoyance. I will join you presently."

The Marchioness looked up as Avondale entered.

"I have not seen you yet to-day, Mr. Avondale. You were not at breakfast or lunch."

"You had left the table before I came to breakfast. Wyversley and myself went for an early walk—the morning tempted us. I believe I have to congratulate your ladyship on the honour conferred upon your friend Mr. Samuel Simpkins."

"My friend! Mr. Avondale!

"You took great interest in him last summer, and must, doubtless, be greatly delighted to find that others beside yourself are able to appreciate genuine merit."

The Marchioness knew not whether to laugh or frown at Avondale's quiet tone of sarcasm.

"The choice does credit to the discrimination of the Ministry," he went on, addressing Exmoor, whose face showed him to be in a desperately bad humour. Exmoor looked savagely at him, and,

being unable to determine if he spoke in banter or in seriousness, replied—

"Ah—so you think."

"If all the selections are of the same kind, the country will form but one opinion of the good taste and judgment of the Ministry," he continued.

Exmoor stared dubiously, but did not speak.

"Mr. Samuel—Sir Samuel Simpkins, I beg his pardon—is such an active, energetic man, so very determined. His election for Dirty Lucre cost him £7,000, and he polled nearly 400 voters. He is an excellent specimen of the shopkeeping fraternity, the very type of a successful tradesman, attentive to his business, submissive to his customers, civil, obliging, honest, never, so 'tis affirmed, convicted, even when a retail dealer, of short weight; always at his desk by nine o'clock, and not making his clerks come more than half an hour earlier, and seldom working them above fifteen hours in a day. And then, such a worthy man—he has built three chapels. It is the truth, Lady Wharfedale, you should not laugh," —it was really FitzHenry laughing, he being in the rear of Exmoor—"three whole chapels; and

he gives the ministers £50 a year each; and, on Sundays, he invites them, by turns, to dine with him. He pays, too, all the expense of lighting and heating, putting the pew-rents into his pocket, in order not to blazon forth to the world, by publishing accounts, the greatness of his charity. So upright that some envious spirits are anxious to cast dirt upon his reputation, and the Custom House officers have even ventured, once or twice, to lay informations against him, but they, as the Rev. David Malachi Twaddle, pastor of the chapel last built, piously observed, 'were doubtless urged on by the machinations of the Prince of Darkness, who is ever prowling about ready to lay hands upon sinners, and is especially desirous of seizing our beloved Samuel, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' If Mr. Twaddle's argument seems at all faulty, Lady Wharfedale, it is probably because the rev. gentleman is a subscriber to the 'Morning Mercury.'"

Here FitzHenry and Bransdon, who had been labouring under an uncontrollable propensity to laugh, simultaneously blew their noses with much unnecessary noise; and Exmoor, with the least approach to a smile, observed—

"I was not aware he was so extremely devout."

"His wife, too, is such a motherly personage, so stout, so very—uh—aristocratic, with such a red countenance. She always reminds me of my bed maker at Trinity, such a considerate woman she was, who never allowed my butter, or jam, or marmalade, to get stale; and gave my tea and sugar to my cat, and fed the canary on any cold meat that might be left, to save it being wasted, and who was troubled with 'a little 'oarseness, which nothing didn't do no good to, but a little brandy.' The Marchioness was excessively charmed with her appearance at the Horticultural Show, in May, with her bonnet strings fluttering in the air, and her bran new grenadine trailing its gorgeous length along, and her seven daughters attendant—such engaging creatures! Wyversley fell desperately in love with one, the oldest, but, as he, unfortunately, could not catch either eye, both of them being somewhat erratic in their movements, 'twas all in vain he sighed his sighs, and breathed his prayers."

Wyversley attempted a reply, but his indignant denial was drowned by a peal of laughter, in the

midst of which the Marquis and the Duke entered.

"Stanhope Broome is another of the new dignitaries," said Exmoor, glancing at Bransdon.

"I am delighted to hear it," replied Avondale. "Broome's character is most estimable. How nobly he resigned his seat to Blocke Head, when that most talented and capable gentleman had failed to secure his election. How splendidly he behaved while the contest was going on at Marshfield, between him and Henderson,"—Bransdon was shifting, as though his chair was most uncomfortable—"it was Henderson, I think? How very chivalrously he spoke of him. How he lauded the talents and ability of his opponent—'a person who had wandered over the world, prying into the affairs of other nations, and was now come back to prove to us that other people were quite as good as ourselves, and that their Governments were, perhaps, in some respects, superior to our own.' How very carefully he avoided the slightest allusion to topics which might inflame the mob, or arouse their ill-will against Henderson. What very slight mention he made of his own doings and labours—the

twenty years that he had been owner of the largest factory in Marshfield—his small annual subscriptions to the town charities—the market house that he had rebuilt—the common that he had enclosed near the town; no, I mistake, he did not refer to that. An admirable man! The country will be obliged to you, my lord, for the honour so aptly bestowed."

"So I should think," said Exmoor, "and, of course, you are of the same opinion, Bransdon?"

"There is to be a new knight, Avondale, in addition to the baronets. Who do you think it is?" asked FitzHenry.

"Cannot imagine, unless Maitland has appointed, on his own responsibility, and without consulting his colleagues; and then, I presume, it would be Gregory Gobble."

"Well done, Walter," said the Marquis, "a capital guess."

"You must be joking, my lord," replied Avondale. "It surely cannot be Gobble, the election-general of Maitland's own set."

"It is, I assure you."

"Then—" he paused; "then I beg leave to tender to the Marquis of Exmoor my congratula-

tions on the share which England will assume he has had in such a gross outrage on public morality and decency, and I would humbly submit as a proper person for the vacant garter William Calcraft, Esq."

CHAPTER XIII.

Exmoor arose, and, taking the Duke and Wharfedale by the arm, passed from the room. Bransdon, FitzHenry, and Avondale followed. They entered the library.

"What are your plans, Wharfedale?" asked Exmoor, abruptly.

"To form a party out of the moderate men on both sides."

"I know, but how do you purpose accomplishing this?"

"How are all oppositions rendered successful? By turning to best advantage the slips the enemy makes, and by carefully watching till he at last lays himself open to a *coup de grace*."

"I know that, too—it is not what I mean. What are—what are your watchwords?—the principles which you fancy will be cries around which a party can rally?"

The Marquis looked at FitzHenry, and then

both at Avondale, who spoke slowly, but clearly, with cheek flushed and eye flashing, for he felt that, though his listeners were few, the present consultation was the crisis of his affairs—

"Three,—first, dislike for the present Premier."

"You may dislike him, sir, and so do others; you may say that he is without tact, and cursed with a wretched temper, and so do others; but you cannot say he is not a great man. That first cry will meet with little support."

"More, much more, I think, my lord, than you are willing to admit. Second, the throwing open more widely the portals of the National Church, not the separation of Church and State; and the extending and liberalising, not the secularising, of education."

"Good; that cry will secure many adherents."

"Third, the knitting together into one grand empire the whole of the British dominions, even though such a consolidation should necessitate the abolition, in its present form, of the House of Peers; even though it should require England to give up its autocracy, and to enter, not as parent, but as eldest sister, into the confederacy."

"Good; that cry may be but a dream, but it will bring over to you every youthful member of Parliament. I should be glad to see it realised, even at the cost you name, but I fear it never will be—what say you, Bransdon?"

"I do not see the impracticability, far less the impossibility, of accomplishing it. The country, however, is not yet ready for the discussion of it. But every advance in science—every discovery that quickens locomotion, that renders less dilatory our means of communicating with distant regions—will make more feasible such a consummation; and, what more than aught else will aid it, will be bad harvests, following on slackened trade, and inducing semi-starvation to multitudes of our operatives. But, Exmoor, though I firmly believe such a vast dominion as Avondale has pictured, as I myself have dreamed of, must, in time to come, be built up, though I believe, too, that many of our countrymen now and again catch an indistinct glimpse of it, yet I frankly confess that I believe, even more firmly, that the first cry—hostility to the Premier—will be the most attractive, and win over to us our most numerous associates. The nation is not

ripe for great measures, far less for undergoing the life-long labour and the stupendous changes necessary for the realisation of an heroic ideal. Parliament aptly represents the spirit of the hour. It is content to waste its sessions in petty plot and intrigue, content to provide for the nation's daily existence. We must take it as it is, guide its whims and control its fancies as best may serve our immediate ends, then educate, prompt, incite it, and infuse new strength, new vigour, new vitality into it, to seek after a more glorious object."

Exmoor had listened attentively.

"I do not deny that the nation is drifting onward into time, without aim or purpose, without pilot or helmsman. I bitterly regret that it is so. Nor do I deny that it would be easy enough to eject the Ministry of which, at present, I am one, from their posts as officers of the vessel. The question is, who will replace them to more advantage. Can we? Can you, Bransdon, point out the far distant shore which the ship is to make for and discern the tortuous channel by which she must reach it? Have you, Wharfedale, confidence enough in yourself to say that you

will stick unfalteringly to the helm when the breakers are on either hand, and the white foam is seething against the sides, and the wind is roaring through the rigging, stripping off the sails and hurling overboard the crew, and the wreckers have lit the false fires that blind and dazzle and lure you on to ruin? And if, midst the roar, a leak is sprung, and the water comes gurgling in, gaining inch by inch upon the pumps, can you, FitzHenry, man yourself to stand beside the wearied sailors and utter words of courage and of comfort while the storm more loudly rages and the blackness deeper grows, and the bark slowly settles down?"

No one broke the silence.

"I speak seriously," he said, "for it seems to me that the time is come when those who assume the task of guiding the nation should assume it with full knowledge of the responsibility."

"You speak almost too seriously, Herbert," said the Duke of Strathclyde, "or I should rather say too timidly. Do not conjure up difficulties which do not, or dangers which may not, exist. I have every belief in Britain's future. There is a wonderful fund of vitality in every people, and

in none more so than in the Anglo-Saxon race. Moreover you look at only one side of the matter. The dangers that beset the nation will equally beset it whoever may be at the head of affairs; and they will be the more inimical in proportion as the Government is weak and incapable. Let the question which you ask yourself be, can a firmer, more united, more able Cabinet be formed than that now in office?"

"I think such can be formed," said Wharfedale and Bransdon.

"I am certain it can be," said FitzHenry.

"And why are you certain?" enquired Exmoor. "What support can you rely upon?"

"Excuse me, my lord," broke in Avondale, "but over caution is worse than downright cowardice. If every tiny circumstance is to be duly allowed for, and every counteracting cause is to have fit weight assigned it; if we are to hesitate here dreading Sloe's vituperation or Rowe's envy, Bayndon's abuse or Simpkin's vulgarity; if we are to pause there lest we offend against Blocke Head's obtuseness or Mulgrave's incapacity, Maitland's condecension or Greenham Softhead's conceit; if we are to do all this

before we venture to proceed, and even then to shiver at the impending consequences of our temerity—I conceive, pardon my presumption, my lord, and deem my opinion expressed with the utmost deference—I conceive that the Marquis of Wharfedale had better pray your lordship to let words now spoken escape your memory, and strive himself with the assistance of those who have hitherto counselled him to mature his plans."

"Well spoken, Avondale," said Exmoor, smiling. "I like you for your candour, and your sarcasm; you know where to find the weak points in one's armour, and how to play upon the sore places. You will be of assistance to any party if you ever enter the House. But granting we are strong in numbers, to whom do you propose to allot the chief posts? We shall not detach all my colleagues; we cannot coalesce with the Tories."

"It is a question the Marquis should answer."

"No, go on, Avondale," said Wharfedale.

"Go on," added FitzHenry.

"We shall not need leaders," continued Avondale, thus emboldened. "Yourself would retain

your own post; Bransdon, Kerr, Jardine, Herbert Williams, Tintern, Kelley, would take the Foreign, Indian, Colonial, Education, Home, Finance offices respectively; the Duke of Strathclyde would be Lord President; the Marquis, Prime Minister; the Duke of Lincoln, Privy Seal; Lord Hainsbury, Secretary for Ireland; the Earl of Cotteswold, Chief Commissioner of the Poor Law Board; Sir Edward Pilgrim goes on the woolsack; Mr. FitzHenry becomes Attorney-General."

"Good, good," all had muttered approvingly as he slowly mentioned each name.

"And have you no place for me?" asked Ravenshurst, who, with Wyversley, had been listening. "I may be a scholar and a dilettante, perhaps, but I should like to be with my friends."

"Better go with myself as Bransdon's subs."

"I should be highly flattered," said Bransdon. "Cannot you also utilise some of those young peers who are literally dying of inanity? Wyversley for instance."

"Let them be attached to different departments as supernumeraries. Six of the offices

would be presided over by commoners ; to each of these might be added a youthful member of the Upper House."

"A very good suggestion."

"Well, Exmoor, what is it to be?" asked the Marquis. "For myself, I am perfectly willing to take any post if that would influence your decision; change with Strathclyde for example."

"No, no," said the Duke, "I have never proposed joining any Government at all, but you have been so persuading, and Mr. Avondale and Bransdon have put such a different colouring on the political world as I have hitherto seen it, that I suppose I must change my determination. The present arrangement does capitally, if, that is, it can be carried out. Tintern is doubtful, Lincoln is half a Conservative, and Cotteswold is wholly one. But I, at least, will not raise obstacles where they may not exist."

Exmoor looked round the group; his glance was of mingled doubt and hesitation ; he turned towards the window, and noticing the brightness of the declining sun, said—

"It is an hour to post time; come out in the fresh air, Wharfedale, and you, Strathclyde."

They did so.

"The first part of the attack is successfully concluded, Avondale," said FitzHenry. "This evening's post bears Exmoor's resignation to the Premier. You may as well drop Jardine a line to tell him so."

CHAPTER XIV.

Avondale had the honour of conducting Lady Lucy de Breaute to dinner, which was laid in the hall, in accordance with the custom when many visitors were at the Towers. "So the list of new titles scarcely comes up to your standard of worthiness," she said.

"Not altogether; and I presume you would object to admitting some of them into your own circle."

"Not at all—if they can get any one to introduce them."

"If! obstacle amply sufficient. But you will have, in a few more days, a flood of peers—*novi homines*—overwhelming the old aristocracy."

"Perhaps. Have you any idea of them?"

"Percy Mulgrave, first. He will be ejected from Waterbridge, that's *un fait accompli*. But being Irish Secretary, he must be in Parliament—it's an indispensable qualification of the post.

Therefore, unless he should be declared guilty of personal bribery, direct and clear, Maitland will raise him to the peerage. Lady Thanet, too, would not object to changing the title which she has assumed, and to which she has no right, even by courtesy. Strickland will be another. Mordaunt Tracy and Hubert Digby, his sons-in-law, *in esse* and *in posse* will answer for him."

"Some will be raised a step, I suppose?"

"No doubt—Frescheville one. But if he gets even an Irish Marquisate it will be paying a high price for him. To let him remove the pearls from over the strawberry leaves would be an indignity to the rest of the order."

"Sir Marmaduke Alton—is he a supporter of Mr. Maitland?"

"I imagine so—why? He commands half-a-dozen seats in the Lake district. Maitland has not been sounding him, has he?"

"I don't know—I am not *politique*," she replied, with a smile. "Mr. Head has been staying at Coniston, and Sir George Edmunds, and Mr. and Mrs. Maitland for a couple of days; but, of course, that means nothing. Is not Mr. Maitland's son seeking a seat?"

"So it is reported," replied Avondale, who began to think that, perhaps, Alton might, like Frescheville, have been already tampered with.

"There was a Baron Coniston some centuries back. Sir Marmaduke has an idea that he is entitled to it by the female line," continued Lady Lucy, smiling still more meaningly.

"Maitland is welcome to him. He is quite as useless and pompous as Frescheville, though possessed of rather more brains. We have secured Exmoor; he is worth twenty such men as the baronet, even if they have two or three pocket boroughs each."

"So papa tells me. I am delighted. Herbert is so very excellent, such an—don't laugh"—with a slight toss of the head, as she noticed Avondale's look of amusement—"don't laugh, it is not polite—I have known him a long time. I won't tell you what papa said about yourself."

"Oh, Lady Lucy," pleaded Avondale, "you are a thorough tyrant. I daren't even have a thought of my own."

"Well, sir, papa said"—there he is nodding to you; he wishes to say something to you—"Papa told me how well you had spoken—and Mr.

Bransdon, too—in the library, and that your arguments had won over Herbert, who had hesitated so long, and that you have the whole Cabinet ready formed. I should so like to have heard you—I wish I had been a man."

"You! I thought you 'sailed with supreme dominion through the azure depth of air,' high above the cares and strifes that vex inferior mortals."

"Very few of us are so completely free from mundane concerns; perhaps no woman but sets up a goal which she tries to reach."

"And a woman's truest ambition directs her to a goal far more enviable, and far nobler, than that to which man's unsteady passions can direct him."

The listener blushed, as though in the few words lay an allusion whose point she could perceive. Then she said,—"'Man's unsteady passions,' Mr. Avondale—I may say, using your own expression, that I have considered you free from feeling and sentiment, that you had the cool head and emotionless nerves of an aged diplomatist or lawyer."

"You have yourself given a reply. We cannot

remove ourselves from sympathy with our kin. But while a man's heart is essentially inconstant, variable, wavering, a woman's is unchangeable, steadfast, sure, ever pure and true, ever devoted to the one object, like the sun which shines with a steady light from day to day, though clouds may interpose to separate the face of the earth from him."

"Very pretty—the latter part—but I fear somewhat incorrect," she replied, as the guests rose.

In the drawing room, Lady Wharfedale congratulated Avondale.

"Ralph says all the credit of gaining Exmoor must be given to you. Poor Maitland! I really pity him, to see his colleagues thus dropping off, and an Opposition thus formidable created months before the session. And what a flattering tongue you must have! What were you saying at dinner to Lucy? She was actually laughing—a most extraordinary occurrence—and blushing—which is scarcely less than a miracle. Exmoor will be jealous of you."

"He need not be, though I rather believe Lady Lucy would be somewhat pleased if he were."

"Do you really think so? We all should be so glad."

"It is Exmoor's fault, not the lady's."

"Perhaps so. But Exmoor is not altogether a marrying man; he has been devoted to politics, and had a seat in the House ever since he came of age, and, consequently, has had no time for what Mr. Avondale would call less important topics. Lucy is rather exacting, and has snubbed him once or twice; and thus it has happened as it is. But see, she is going to the piano, with Exmoor—you must be an enchanter. She has a splendid voice. I hope she will give us 'Lorelei' —you know it, Mr. Avondale."

Yes, Avondale knew it. It had been a favourite song of his, but never yet had the words spoken with such meaning to him as then.

"Der Schiffer im kleinen Schiffe
Ergreift es mit wildem Weh;
Er schaut nicht die Felsenriffe,
Er schaut nur hinauf in die Höh.

"Ich glaube die Wellen verschlingen,
Am ende Schiffer und Kahn,
Und das hat mit ihrem Singen
Die Lorelei gethan."

Lady Campion was in the room. He did not venture to look for her, but the sympathy that

exists between like souls told him her thoughts were similar to his. The Marquis and FitzHenry joined them while the song was proceeding. "Many of those German airs are exquisite," said the former. "The words and sentiments are often, however, much better than the setting."

"I prefer genuine English," said FitzHenry. "We can express in our own tongue all the feelings the human soul is capable of, and the language can be rendered as musical as that of any other nation." The song ended, Lady Campion acceded to Wyversley's request for a similar favour. She turned over several pieces of music, but found none to her liking; then tried an Italian and German air, but neither suited her mood; and, at last, for want of better, commenced "The Bridge." She had a strong mellow voice, well adapted to the air, and she threw a great deal of pathos into it as she sang. She appeared unusually affected, especially as she uttered the lines—

"For my soul was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care;
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear."

CHAPTER XV.

The next day, after lunch, Avondale went for a solitary walk. He had been for the last twenty-four hours under considerable excitement, and he wished to recover some of his wonted coolness. He was at last fairly embarked on the enterprise, and able associates were with him. They had the talents requisite to lead a great party; had he the tact, as indispensably requisite, to control it and keep it together? He believed so, and he, therefore, considered the really difficult part of the work accomplished. Other members of the Government would fall off as difficulties presented themselves or quarrels arose—it was a mere matter of time; and once the council of chiefs completely formed, the herding the common lot would be easy enough. He saw the edifice crowned with success—he saw himself, the youngest man since the heaven-sent Minister, directing the counsels of the party he had formed

—and the anticipation yielded intoxicating delight.

Other thoughts, too, kept whirling through his brain, and contributed to throw his mind off its usual balance. Clare Campion's figure was ever before him. There was a fascination about her which attracted him, even while he blamed the folly that possessed him. Ambition was to be his goal; love he had banished—so he assured and reassured himself—yet what was this sensation which would thrill through him at her appearance? On his way back to the Towers he met her, as fate would have it, by the lake. He came rather suddenly upon her. Both were startled at the *rencontre;* and ere she could recover herself he observed on her face traces of recent tears.

"An unexpected pleasure," he said, employing the first words that rose to his lips in order to get over the awkwardness. "You are a *solitaire*, like myself."

"Yes, yes," she replied, as if speaking to herself, "a *solitaire*—doubly *solitaire*." Then in louder tones—"I have been taking a last look at the grounds."

"A last look!"

"Yes, a last look. We leave to-morrow; perhaps you have not heard so. We have been here almost too long, and my husband is anxious to get back to Campion for a few days' shooting before the November rains set it."

"What a pity you cannot stay over the beginning of next week. I hope you have enjoyed your visit so far."

"Very much—very much. I do not know when I have spent a more agreeable fortnight. The weather, too, has been so very favourable—quite a second summer."

"Yes, most favourable. But even without the fine weather one could not fail to enjoy one's self at Egremond, especially amongst the crowd of people who have filled the Towers lately."

"Especially when one has ample employment to keep the mind from feeding upon useless regrets and from brooding over the past."

"How sadly you speak. Surely your position prevents sadness or grief ever disturbing the serenity of your lot."

"Pray don't ask me—don't ask me," she said, in lowest tone. Avondale was standing

close to her. Both were watching the sun as he rapidly sank in the west. "How beautiful it is!" she went on, in the same whispering tone. "See the sun's rays falling on the fountain and converting the drops into pellets of gold, and against the Castle's time-worn turrets, and upon the trees, still thickly covered with foliage; but the leaves are crisp and dry, and with the first wind they will all fall off. Then the prospect will be changed, and clouds will cover the heavens, and the beauty will be gone. So my beautiful dream has vanished—and I have been so happy! Oh! may you never know the bitterness of having every hope blasted in its birth, and of knowing, even as the cup is offered to your parched lips, that it will be cruelly torn away before you can grasp it!"

"Oh, Clare!" began Avondale. She half turned; her arm touched his, and the mischief was done. Avondale felt a shock through every nerve—the quivering which none can feel but once in their life—the quivering which is the visible manifestation of the spirit's agony—the quivering which shakes the strong man as the earth-throbs shake the volcano, and which dis-

places reason from her throne, it may be for the moment, it may be for life. "Clare! Clare!" he breathed rather than spoke, "my darling, I love you—I love you fondly! Forgive me telling you—forgive me—but I cannot restrain myself longer!"

He pressed her again and again to his breast, showering down kisses on her lips and cheeks. She remained passive in his arms, neither accepting nor repelling his caresses, but weeping abundantly.

"Walter, what have you said?" she moaned. "This is madness; you must forbear. Oh! speak no more—it will kill me!—my heart is so weary—how I love you!—yet I must not."

"Say again that you love me, Clare—say it again. I love you fondly, truly! I will ever love you, Clare; I will be faithful to you though I have to wait years."

He spoke with intense eagerness the hot terms of endearment, still holding her, still kissing her. With a great sigh, she extricated herself from him after a time, but she was unable to stand without the support of his encircling arm.

"Oh, Walter! we are both bereft of our

senses. The remembrance of what you have now said will be a clog on your future movements."

"No, no."

"It will be. I ought not to have allowed you to see me alone. I knew what would happen, and yet I wickedly hoped for this meeting. I shall never forgive myself. But my life has been so utterly wretched — a hideous, dreary blank—and the last few months have been so happy. When you left the Towers in August I looked forward to the time when you would return, and I should be once more with you. May God forgive me my sin! I did not think of it as a sin—I did not know my own feelings, but I do know them now. I woke up yesterday to the full reality of the truth. The agony that I have endured since! But it is over now. This must be our parting—our parting for ever."

"Oh no, Clare, not for ever—not for ever. Unsay those words."

"I dare not unsay them, Walter. You will soon cease to think of me as you do now, and I would not have you think then, when your opinion changes, that I have been altogether

wicked. We part now, and you must forget me."

"I cannot."

"You must. I shall try to banish your image; but I cannot now. I shall be able to do so after a time; but till then I should like to think that you have not utterly forgotten me. Will you think of me occasionally for one year, Walter?"

"Aye, Clare, and for life. I will not, though you command me, ever forget you."

"No, Walter; for one year. Even that is a wicked wish; but the human heart is weak, and I cannot instantaneously tear from mine what is so firmly planted in it. I have those lines of yours; I shall keep them for a year and then return them. And now we must separate. I shall enter the Towers by the conservatory—you take the carriage drive. See, the day is over."

She held out her hand. Avondale kissed it passionately. She snatched it from him, and was gone.

Avondale walked slowly back, his mind in a greater chaos than when he had left the Towers three hours earlier. The sun's rays still tinted the

fleecy clouds that hung about the sky, but the darkness was hastening on with that stealthy tread that is unheard, save when the watcher dreads the night. Darkness seemed, too, to have come, he knew not why, over his own prospects; and once more he heard, even more clearly than before, the warning words, "Pray God your affections may be turned towards a proper object. Heaven pity the woman if they are not—and you, too! It will be destruction to her, ruin to you; and may be madness to both."

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Jardine had arrived. "The Rubicon is crossed then, Walter?"

"It seems to be so. I hope you don't dread the prospect."

"Oh no—not very much. If I did I should have joined the others."

"Stuart says that most tempting baits have been held out to you. It is evident Maitland sees danger; but why has he needlessly given Exmoor offence?"

"He has been compelled to do so. Rowe and Sloe, however, differing in most matters, agree in cordial hatred of Exmoor. Sloe hates him as being next to the Earl of Wigan, the most typical example of the aristocracy, as it ought to be. Rowe hates him, I scarcely know why—they have had several tourneys, but that alone would scarcely account for it. Rowe, however, is frightfully erratic, and his likes and dislikes

both spring from no settled principle. One could never work with him in Australia; I doubt much if the present Ministry won't find him equally untractable; and if he quarrels with those of almost exactly similar opinions, no wonder that he should do the same with those who differ from him. Here are FitzHenry and the Marquis —both look in much better health than they did towards the end of the Session."

"Hope you have been giving Mr. Jardine a full and perfect report of all proceedings, Avondale," said the Marquis.

"I am this moment come in; but I presume your lordship has saved me the trouble."

"Yes," said Jardine; "the Marquis has told me quite enough to point out how far we have got, and I believe it is some considerable distance —don't you, FitzHenry?"

"The route is certainly much more clearly marked out," replied the lawyer smiling, "than it was some six months ago, when at dinner at your house in town, Mordaunt Tracy—and I fancy myself—recommended Avondale to get into Parliament. With anything like careful

management we cannot fail next Session to turn the flank of the Government, if not altogether to eject them. There is an ominous cry rising already amongst the poor as to the coming winter."

"And there is an equally ominous cry rising in Australia," said Jardine. "The last mail speaks of much discontent on account of the position taken by the Government in respect both to the Supreme Legislatures of New South Wales and Victoria, and to the Crown lands in those two colonies; and private letters to me confirm this. Maitland's views on emigration are not very much appreciated either."

"That single subject will, if well manipulated, afford a pretty heavy indictment," said the Marquis. "It is, too, one of the questions which we have selected as a party cry; so that you, Jardine, have your especial work cut out for you."

"Who takes Ireland?" asked Jardine. "That unfortunate isle is once more in a state of disorder, and it will not be difficult to arraign the Government on that head."

"Who is it, Avondale, will take Ireland?"

inquired the Marquis. "I am ashamed to say that I have really forgotten."

"Hainesbury."

"Hainesbury! That's the man. You remember, Jardine, he gave up the Under Secretaryship of the Foreign Office, because when Garmouth became Premier he was not appointed to the head of it."

"Yes, I remember. He is a good man, at least equal to Bayswater in ability, though, I suppose, without his direct personal weight."

"By the by," said FitzHenry, "it is doubtful if the Government will have an Irish Secretary next Session—in Parliament, I mean. Have you read anything of the Waterbridge Commission, Jardine? It has been sitting more than three weeks. The revelations are astounding, and they seem daily to become worse. Starrett has been convicted of personal bribery—I won't say and also of perjury before the committee, though it looks very like it. Mulgrave—he was heard on Tuesday—has cleared himself, but only by showing that his committee, his agents, his solicitors are arrant rogues and deceivers. I fear, however, Grim Growler is

rather overdoing it. He certainly forgets that he is conducting a judicial inquiry, where the majesty of the law should be upheld. He takes a positive delight in putting witnesses on a mental rack, and so to speak, cudgels the truth out of them, when he cannot extract it by gentler means. All this is doubtless very amusing to outsiders, and it furnishes the newspapers with a means of enlivening the dull season, but it detracts somewhat from most people's ideas of fair treatment, and especially from legal ideas of a judge's demeanour and of forensic urbanity. He has also somewhat capriciously refused one or two of the witnesses their certificates of indemnity; and I fear that if these apply to Queen's Bench, not only would the Court take upon them to give the certificates needed, on the ground that the witnesses had made full disclosures, but also that the Right Honourable Radical, who presides in that Court, would gladly seize the opportunity of bestowing as rough a reprimand on Grim Growler as he has himself bestowed on the most blackguard of the voters."

"I have seen in the Scotch papers but little of the evidence," replied Jardine, "but that little

was quite sufficient to assure me the election would be set aside."

"No doubt of that," said FitzHenry. "I imagine, too, the Attorney-General—whoever may fill that office when the report is presented—will feel bound to prosecute some of the voters, and also Starrett. What the Government will do with Mulgrave is doubtful. He won't voluntarily resign; yet he must, if he is to retain his post, be in Parliament; and they cannot venture to raise him to the Upper House. They might, perhaps, do so if either of the witnesses goes to Queen's Bench for his certificate, and the doings of the Committee should there meet with much animadversion. When are you going, Avondale?"

"The end of next week, or the beginning of the following. I believe I am to be the last—the last examined at Waterbridge. Sir Gregory Gobble has to put in an appearance at Westminster Hall, whither the Commission will adjourn from Waterbridge."

"Well, gentlemen," said the Marquis, "there goes the first bell. I am sorry, FitzHenry, this will be your last dinner with us."

The Countess of Wyversley had likewise come that afternoon—chiefly in order to meet the two sprigs of the Royal Family of Carvada, who were expected on the following Monday.

Lady Campion was very vivacious both at dinner and in the drawing room afterwards, so much so that the Marchioness observed it to Avondale. "They leave to-morrow—rather suddenly; but Sir Hugh has never before made such a long stay. Clare is indeed lively beyond her wont; see how she is bantering Mr. Fitz-Henry. What can be the cause?"

"The fine weather, perhaps," was Avondale's reply, but he knew that in reality her cheerfulness and smiles were, like his own, assumed, and that underneath the heart was aching, as was his, too, but not aching hopelessly like hers.

"What a nice man Mr. FitzHenry is!"

"Mr. FitzHenry is very fortunate."

"I always speak my opinion without flattery. I admire him very much, and so I do Mr. Jardine, though there is a great distinction between them. And I like Mrs. Jardine very much; I am so glad she has accompanied her

husband. By the by, why did you quarrel with Lady Jessie?"

"Because your ladyship commanded me to do so."

"Commanded you, sir! What next? Why was it? The actual reason, if you please."

"Because she yawned at me."

"Poor fellow! what shockingly bad taste! Did your Grace hear that?" to the Duke of Strathclyde.

"No, Lady Wharfedale. What was it?"

"Jessie Frescheville nodded, or yawned, or did something else equally heinous in the midst of Mr. Avondale's highly entertaining converse. Whereat this mirror of chivalry grew highly indignant, would not even take her down to dinner—she complained to me about you, sir—

> 'Alas how light a cause can move
> Dissension between hearts that love,'

And carried his revenge so far as to plot and almost accomplish the death of Digby."

"Poor Digby!" said the Duke. "How is he getting on?"

"Very well; but I really have not heard the

last two days. I asked Reginald to see him this morning for me. Did you, Reginald? See Digby, I mean."

"Yes. He is progressing favourably, and so forth. He was slightly uncomfortable—rather tired of lying in bed—and I left him somewhat more uncomfortable. I told him Exmoor had resigned—which annoyed him a little. I suppose because he had not contributed towards it; and that Jessie had separated in tears from a friend of mine—which annoyed him very much more. Then I added as a *morceau* for his private meditation, that Avondale proposed putting up for Leatherton—if Watts should, as daily expected, give up his seat—you know that Digby has designs upon that borough."

"Oh, Reginald," expostulated the Marchioness. "It was quite cruel of you thus to torment."

"Don't find fault, Lady Wharfedale," laughed the Duke, "if everything is fair in war and love, it certainly is in politics. But I must congratulate you, Wyversley. I was not aware that you were such an adept at inflicting torture."

"He has caught it from Mr. Avondale, I have no doubt," suggested Lady Wharfedale.

"Mr. Avondale is a universal genius," said the Duke. "He gets the credit of everything."

"Your Grace must take Lady Wharfedale's compliments *cum grano*," replied Avondale. "She bountifully distributes equivocal ones, but of others she is very chary, and she never spares one for such a humble slave as myself."

FitzHenry joined them.

"I have a complaint against your ladyship."

"Against me, Mr. FitzHenry! You quite frighten me."

"You compel your visitors to enjoy themselves so thoroughly, that they are loth to quit your hospitable mansion. Going back to London from the Towers is like awakening to the stern realities of every-day life after a dream of fairy-land."

"I am delighted that your visit has been so pleasant; but the weather has been so favourable."

"It is not to the weather; it is to the presiding genius that the pleasure has been due. But unfortunately it has come to an end as all pleasant—and, indeed, disagreeable—things do end. Briefs, musty reports, Acts of Parliament,

moth-eaten parchment rolls—a delightful prospect, is it not, my lord?"

"I dare say he finds it delightful enough," said the Duke, "who is outstripping all his rivals, and before whom the highest prize in his profession is placed, to be taken when it likes him."

FitzHenry left early next morning. Sir Hugh and Lady Campion about mid-day. Lady Campion had carefully avoided Avondale. She met him in the library a short time before her departure. One fervent, maddening embrace—a lingering clutch of the hand—and she tore herself from him, leaving him—the man of cool head and emotionless nerves, who had steeled himself against the allurements of love—utterly overpowered by his passions.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Prince Carvada and his brother, Count Suneville, were received with great pomp and magnificence—troops of servants drawn up in array, and all the other etceteras; and a grand dinner took place in the evening, and a ball afterwards. The festivities were kept up some days; they had come for the shooting, and a couple of covers had been secured for their special delectation; but by the end of the week the number of guests had very greatly diminished. Sir Marmaduke and Lady Alton, Ravenshurst, and several others, left on Thursday.

Lady Wharfedale was unfortunately summoned to town on the Friday by the sudden illness of her sister, the wife of the Earl of Carwithen, and Wyversley accompanied her. Lady Carwithen was subject to disease of the heart, and she was now in London for the purpose of consulting the family physician.

Next morning Avondale received the expected notification from Rosse and Taylor that the Commissioners desired him to attend at Waterbridge, and be examined on the following Tuesday. The day's papers, too, brought other intelligence equally interesting. The Marquis read out the first instalments of Maitland's nobility —"'Two peers are to be raised a step. Mr. Henry Strickland, the well-known banker, has also accepted a peerage, taking his title from Hunstanton, the new watering place on the Wash, near which he has considerable property; and we understand that the barony of Engaine, now in abeyance, will be revived in favour of Mr. Edgar de Engaine Folliott. It is understood, too, that, supposing the report of the Waterbridge Commissioners be favourable, Mr. Percy Mulgrave will be raised to the Upper House.' I suppose, Exmoor, you could have told us this before?"

"Most of it, I believe, if my lips had not been closed."

"I cannot say I altogether approve of your selections. What has either of them done to deserve the distinction? Hillsborough got his

elevation because he has married the sister of Bayswater; Wenlock his for much the same reason, because by marriage he is connected with several families. Strickland owes his, I presume, partly to his money, partly to his sons-in-law—a man's daughters are frequently a nuisance to him; his are certainly a blessing. There is only one left now, Avondale; you had better go in for her."

"No, thanks, my lord. 'My heart is in the Highlands.'"

"Is it? I am greatly pleased to hear you say so. I congratulate."

"No, no; you mistake me altogether," said Avondale, hastily. "I simply mean that—that—my thoughts are—too much engaged about—other things to dream of falling in love—just at present."

"Begin to dream about it pretty quickly."

"Did your lordship do so at my age? And won't you considerately extend the same advice to the Marquis of Exmoor?"

"You are unlike either of us, Walter. You are one of those beings whose passions, apparent, not existent, because habitually kept in

control, break forward with but the greater mischief and ruin when once loosened from restraint, as the extreme of devastation is caused when a volcano, clad with the snows of ages, wakes from its slumber and pours down its sides first a torrent of liquid ice and snow, and then a stream of molten lava. I have, before this, cautioned you. I take the liberty of doing so again. You do not know yourself. Here you are at six-and-twenty, possessed of the discretion and foresight of the veteran of sixty, but with your discretion and foresight are mingled the temerity and the self-reliance of youth. But one side of your nature is, as yet, developed—think you the other is, therefore, dwarfed? Indeed it is scarcely true that the other side is not developed. What are your ambition and energy but substitutes for the passions with which, at your age, other men's souls thrill. Excuse my preaching, and you, too, Exmoor. But don't you think I am right in what I have said to Avondale?"

"I certainly think so," replied Exmoor. "A young man may be free from the gentler emotions, but, if so, he must be a cynic or a

hermit, whose sympathies have been already cauterized with the red-hot iron of deception—this agony, I trust, Avondale has not experienced. Or he must be a kind of half-formed mortal, in which case, as he is utterly precluded from comprehending and entering into one-half of the influences that affect his fellows, he can never hope to take high rank as a leader."

"I trust," said Avondale, with a forced laugh, "that I am neither a Timon nor a *lusus naturæ*, and that, if 'I am dwelling alone in a world of moon, my soul is not quite a stagnant tide,' as Poe hath it; and, doubtless, some day all will be changed by the appearance of a 'fair and gentle Eulalie,' and so forth. But about these creations. Is it really settled that Mulgrave is to go to the Upper House?"

"It is scarcely politic to ask me that question, Avondale," replied Exmoor. "It is, however, not positively settled. I suppose I may venture so far to divulge State secrets."

"No very great secret," observed Wharfedale. "It is not at all likely that any one would venture to offer him a peerage, while such a damning cloud is still hanging over him. Nor can he

resign his seat. Otherwise he would have a very good opportunity of succeeding Folliott in Lindesse."

"He is rather unfortunately fixed," observed Avondale. "But FitzHenry thinks he has cleared himself. If so, I suppose that Maitland will venture to give him a title, even before the report of the Commissioners is presented."

"Very risky, very risky," said the Marquis. "Mulgrave ought to resign. Maitland dare not meet Parliament without the Irish Secretary in one of the Houses. It seems to me he would run just as much risk in case he should give him a coronet, unless Mulgrave, by some extraordinary concatenation of circumstances, contrives to clear himself from every stain. By the by, Avondale, I have been almost forgetting that this is the last time I shall have an opportunity of seeing you for a week or two. We always spend the Christmas in the country, but we shall be in town by the first week in the New Year. Meanwhile where will you be—in town, or do you purpose going across the country home from Waterbridge?"

"I shall come back to London. I don't ad-

mire Lyddonshire at this time of the year. Mr. Jardine, too, goes to London when he leaves the Towers."

"Very good. You, Exmoor, I think, winter in town also. You will be able to carry on operations unremittingly. I must have a regular report from you, Avondale, once a week at least. I will run up if I am wanted at any time; but that is not very likely. Exmoor, Jardine, FitzHenry, and Bransdon will form a quartette, to whom I should be an incumbrance rather than an aid."

"No, no, Wharfedale," interposed Exmoor. "You are much better fitted than either of us for leader; and Jardine will say the same—here he is—won't you, Jardine?"

"Yes—though I have no idea what you're asking me."

"Wharfedale is disparaging himself, saying that we—you, the Lawyer, Bransdon and myself, who will be in London the next two months, will be able to get on better without than with him. But I assert that no other could presume to contest with him the post of chief."

"I agree with you, most decidedly. But we shall not do much till the New Year opens, and then the Marquis will be with us, disciplining, directing, marshalling his forces for the attack.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Avondale left Egremond that afternoon for York. The Sunday he spent in the ancient city, and went on to London by the night express.

He left town by the mid-day train for Waterbridge. He had secured half a first-class carriage to himself, for he was rather tired, and he hoped to go to sleep for an hour or two; but just as the train was starting, a lady was put into the compartment. He was rather annoyed, but as she was closely veiled, he thought she was probably an elderly personage, whose presence would not interfere with his devotions to Somnus. His drowsiness, however, passed away, and he could not forbear glancing furtively at his fellow traveller. The figure seemed familiar to him, but all ladies are much alike when dressed similarly. The dress, too, seemed familiar, but what difference between one dress and another.

They were some fifteen miles from London when the veil was thrown back, and he recognised the features of—Clare Campion. The window between their division and the next—in which there was, fortunately, no one—was up, and he was by her side in an instant—

"Clare, Clare, my darling," he breathed. But she trembled violently.

"My God, I must be mad. Oh, Walter don't despise me, don't despise me."

"Despise you, Clare! my darling, my love! Oh, Clare, you cannot think how forlorn I have been for the last week. They have congratulated me on my buoyancy and gaiety, but my heart has been aching."

"Mine has been aching, too, Walter, and aching with a pain that you cannot know. There is no hope, no future before me—nothing but the blackness of misery and the agony of despair. What have I done that such a weight of suffering should be laid upon me?" she groaned, closing her eyes, leaning her head wearily against his shoulder.

He kissed her pale face from which life itself seemed to have fled, and her bloodless lips,—

"Speak not thus, Clare," he prayed huskily. "I love you, dearest; love you intensely."

The tears that burst from his eyes and fell on her forehead revived her. "I know, I feel you love me, Walter, but you ought not; and I love you, but I ought not. I trusted when I left you the other day that I should be strong enough to endure my own torture, and never to see you again; but I am very weak. I came up to see Lady Carwithen—she is much better now—and have stayed with Alice (Lady Wharfedale). She had a letter from her husband on Saturday, saying you would be going to Waterbridge by this train. I went from Wharfedale House this morning, intending to return home, but on my way to the station a sudden madness came over me. I could not help myself. I would not take a ticket at King's Cross; but I came here instead, prompted by the insane resolve to see you."

"My darling, how can I thank you. Your image has not been absent from me one minute. Clare, dear Clare."

"I have thought of you by day, dreamed of you by night, Walter, though all the while I

knew how wicked it was. But I could not help myself. For more than ten years I have not known what it was to be happy. When I was a girl, I was bright, and gay, and joyful, though I was poor, for my father had but a small income. Then I married, and all people congratulated me, and I have since had wealth and luxuries—all that men and women long for, Walter—but I have had no companionship, no communion with kindred souls. The world was a blank till—till —you, Walter, crossed my path. Then I felt happy again, and my heart grew light as it was years ago. I could not imagine the reason, Walter; and indeed I was afraid to inquire—I was afraid the cloud and the gloom would return. But I did not suspect that you were the cause, Walter—indeed I did not. Do not think me altogether abandoned."

"Clare, my darling, do not, I beseech you, do not accuse yourself. Accuse me; it was I that forced the confession from you, though you avoided me."

"I met you several times towards the end of the season, when everybody was speaking of you, and my sorrows vanished, and the burden upon

me grew lighter when you spoke to me, but I could not see my danger, even though my heart would beat the faster when you approached. I met you afterwards at Egremond. What a fortnight of joy that was to me! Would to God I had died at its close! Those few days I lived only in the present—I remembered no past, I thought of no future. The days were finer, and the sky was clearer, and the country was more lovely than they had ever been before. I lived for I loved, and I grew young again, so Alice told me. The colour came once more to my cheeks, but it was chiefly there when you spoke; and my voice recovered somewhat of its magic when you listened; but I would not see my danger. I did see it and yet I would not, for did ever a dying traveller put away from him a life-giving draught? And you had restored life to my spirit—could I immediately crush it out?"

"Clare, what can I say to you? You speak so sadly and mournfully—you pain me more than I can express. I love you, Clare, love you, love you."

"Then, Walter, we were both at the Towers again. But I need not go on. I have been

miserably sinful; but why were you thrown in my way? Why does God lay upon us such a burden of wretchedness, and then tempt us? Why am I shut out for ever from happiness; for ever, Walter. Would I were dead!"

"Hush, hush, Clare! I will be true to you; I will, Clare."

"No, no, Walter, it must not be. Truth to me would be unfaithfulness to yourself. There is a great gulf between us which could be crossed in only one way, and that way would be destruction to me, ruin to yourself. I am not so overwhelmed by my own sorrow as to be willing to blast your prospects in order to lighten it. It has been a temporary madness which has overpowered me to-day; but I am more content now that I have seen you. I shall get out at Hatton Junction, and go back to London. We shall part for the last time on this earth. I shall ever be thinking of you while I live. May your lot be crowned with glory, may every blessing attend you! I pray you not to forget me for a few short months, and I hope you will now and then, even afterwards, bestow a thought on me."

"I will not forget you, Clare; I will not forget you; I cannot."

"You will and must. With all men, and especially with you, love is a subordinate passion, with all women, and especially with me, for you it is a vehement agony which cannot be quenched. But please think of me sometimes while I live, and when you are married and I am dead, ask your wife also to offer a prayer for the soul of her erring sister who loved you so madly."

Avondale vowed that his love could never change, but she gently checked his protestations, and they attempted, not very successfully, to talk of other matters. He proposed to accompany her back to town, but she would not allow him.

"We part for ever, Walter. I have command over myself, and I can now say good bye. Weakness might seize on me if I consented to your returning with me to town."

The train slackened speed as they approached Hatton.

"One single kiss more, Walter," she asked.

A long, long, long press, such as only two

young lives can give, just ere fate raises between them the wall of eternal separation. She almost fainted as the train stopped, but recovered herself by a strong effort. The return train was due in fifteen minutes, while Avondale, who had changed carriages, had to wait half an hour. He was very anxious about her returning alone, but she was quite certain she should do well enough.

"I shall stay at the Great Northern Hotel to-night, and go on to-morrow morning."

While pacing the platform Avondale was surprised to see Wyversley.

"Will you allow Wyversley to accompany you?"

"Oh, no; he would recognise me."

"He would not; I did not, Clare, do you suppose any one else could? Besides, it might hereafter be better if he did so."

She saw the force of the latter argument, and at length consented. Avondale left her to speak to Wyversley.

"Did not expect to see me here, I suppose, Walter. Lady Wharfedale mentioned yesterday you were going to Waterbridge to-day. I forgot to ask her by what train; indeed, I did not re-

solve to run down till this morning, when a sudden fancy seized me to inspect the commission whose proceedings are attracting so much attention just now. I took this train as the most likely to contain you, but I did not see you get in."

"I fear I have a favour to ask you. A friend of mine is going to town. She is going to the Great Northern Hotel to-night. She has no one with her. Will you accompany her? Excuse my making such an unconscionable request."

Wyversley, not a little astonished, replied—

"Yes."

"And I should be glad if you would take the utmost care not to breathe a word about the circumstance to any one."

Wyversley, of course, assented. He was considerably mystified, and racked his brain to guess who the lady might be, but he could form no satisfactory conclusion, though if he had not left Lady Campion with the Marchioness he would have been inclined to suspect her, and therefore dismissed all speculation, and discharged to the best of his ability the confidence placed in him. Avondale had to introduced her as "Mrs. Symonds;" that was the extent of his informa-

tion. He saw her safely to the Hotel, but she was very quiet and taciturn, acknowledging his attention only by monosyllables; and the remainder of the evening he spent with Lady Wharfedale. Often afterwards he recurred to the incident, but he could get no clue to the mystery. His friend never in any way alluded to it; and he, of course, did not venture to question him upon it. So it continued a puzzle, and, indeed, to Wyversley, it ever continued such.